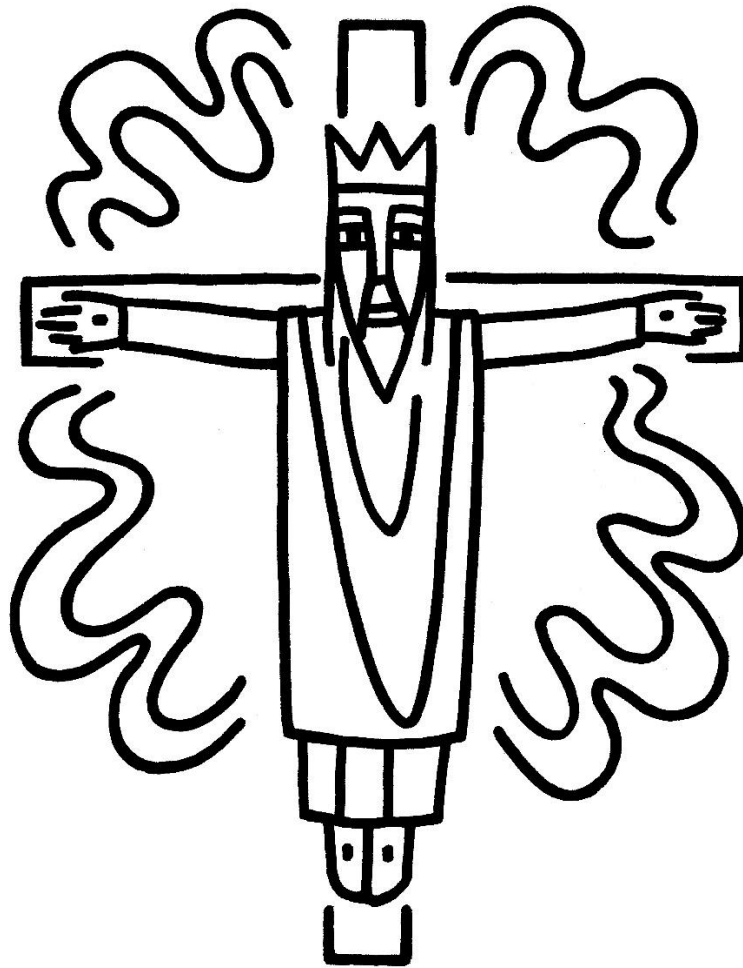




"[Christ] is the image of the invisible God."

Colossians 1:11a

**Mars United Presbyterian and St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
Joint Youth-Led Worship Service**

24th Sunday after Pentecost – November 23, 2025

420 Beaver St., PO Box 411

Mars, PA 16046-0411

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Phone: 724-625-1830

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Rev. Brian Hauser, Preacher

Rev. Katie McNeal, Presiding Minister

Maizy Fisher, Director of Music Ministries

*We are delighted to have you worship with us this morning!
Know that you are welcome here just as you are.*

If you are looking for a church to call home, why not consider making this one your own? If this is your first time worshipping at St. John, please fill out the visitor information card stapled to your bulletin.

*Everything you need to follow worship can be found in this bulletin. As you are comfortable, please rise when there is an * and join in the congregational responses, noted in **bold**. All songs are marked with numbers. The red book in the pew has many of the songs. Look for the large number in the upper corner of the page to find the correct song.*

*During the time of **Peace**, you are invited to turn to those around you and offer a word of peace. We suggest a handshake and saying, "Peace be with you." You are also welcomed to offer another gesture of peace (wave, fist-bump, smile, etc.). Hand sanitizer is available in each pew.*

*At the time of **Offering**, you are invited to share a gift. Envelopes are available in the pews if you prefer. Online gifts may be made using the QR code below:*



*You may also offer updates to our ongoing prayer list using the yellow cards in the pews and placing them in the offering plates. **Visitor information cards** and member attendance cards (attached to the front of the bulletin) may also be placed in the offering plates.*

*You are invited to come forward to receive the elements for **Holy Communion**. We will commune both sides at the same time, beginning in the front rows. When you come forward, you may receive the bread from the pastor (gluten free wafers are available), then pre-filled cups with wine or grape juice from the assisting minister. You may consume the elements after receiving them then place the empty cup in the tray held by the acolyte. Those who do not receive Holy Communion are welcome to come forward for a blessing.*

*If you need a **restroom**, restrooms are located on the bottom floor at the far side of the building from the elevator. Restrooms may be accessed either via the stairs in the rear of the sanctuary, the stairs by the Greeting Area, or the elevator.*

*A **playroom** is available downstairs for children who need a break from the worship service. This room is by the elevator on the lower level. An adult must remain with the child. Children are also welcome to utilize the books and puzzles available in the Greeting Area on the top level by the elevator.*

We are blessed to have our youth lead us in worship this morning. While children and youth always play a vital role in our weekly worship, today they get to participate in more ways than on other Sundays. The Mars Area Youth Group and Kids Club meet every other week and are joint ministries of Mars United Presbyterian Church and St. John Lutheran Church. Regular meetings include games, activities and conversations tackling faith topics in engaging and age-appropriate ways. In addition to regular meetings, participants are invited to engage in extra events and service projects. To learn more about these groups, contact Pastor Brian Hauser (Mars United Presbyterian Church) or Pastor Katie McNeal (St. John Lutheran Church).

In worship we come together from various places and backgrounds and traditions. We come together as a diverse body of individuals united together with people of all places and times in the communion of God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Welcome. We are glad that you are here.

PRELUDE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Be still!

We come to quiet ourselves in this haven of holiness.

Be still and know . . .

we come to discern the Word which can set us free.

Be still and know that God is

our Hope, our Help, our Refuge, and our Redeemer.

Be still and know that God is here!

THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

GATHERING SONG *His Banner Over Me Is Love

1. The Lord is mine and I am his. His banner over me is love (x3)
His banner over me is love

2. He calls me to the banqueting table. His banner over me is love (x3)
His banner over me is love

3. He is the vine and we are the branches. His banner over me is love (x3)
His banner over me is love

4. He is the shepherd and we are the sheep. His banner over me is love (x3)
His banner over me is love

***GREETING**

Peace to you and welcome from God our life-giver,
the Creator who loves without limit,
the Savior who bridged death and life,
and the Spirit who overcomes every barrier.

***CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

God is here, and God sees through every defense that fools the world.
Since we cannot hide from God, there is nothing left to do
but to be honest with each other and humble before God.
So, in humility, we confess our sins,
knowing that God is our hope, our help, our refuge, and our redeemer.

**God, we have acted helpless, even when you called us to action.
We have resisted your truth, even when our lies were exhausting.
We have behaved as though we were alone, even when you were beside us.
God, we have believed we were dying, even when you helped us grow.**

God knows we can never undo the sins of this world.
The stories of a painful past still echo here today.

Yet before our first mistakes, God perfected the plan for salvation.
God forgives your sins, all of them.
Even when signs of our old lives remain, God's forgiveness is still at work.
God sets us free to chart a new path.

*CANTICLE OF PRAISE *Glory to God*



1 Glo-ry be to God in heav-en; peace, good-will to all the earth.
2 Glo-ry be to Christ for - ev - er, Lamb of God and Lord of love.
3 Ho - ly One we now ac-claim you; Lord a - lone, to you we call;



Might-y God of all cre - a - tion, Fa - ther of sur - pass - ing worth:
Son of God and gra - cious Sav - ior, you have come from heav'n a - bove;
Ho - ly One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:



we ex - alt you, we a - dore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.
on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.
Je - sus Christ, with God the Spir - it, in the Fa - ther's splen - dor bright.



Saints and an - gels bow be - fore you; here on earth our songs we raise.
Hear our prayer; re - store, for - give us; in your prom - ise firm we stand.
For the peace that we in - her - it, glo - ry be to God on high!

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

O God, our true life, to serve you is freedom, and to know you is unending joy. We worship you, we glorify you, we give thanks to you for your great glory. Abide with us, reign in us, and make this world into a fit habitation for your divine majesty, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

READING: Colossians 1:11-20

A reading from Colossians

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, so that you may have all endurance and patience, joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, ¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord and Sav - ior: o - pen now your sav - ing word.



Let it burn like fire with - in us; speak un - til our hearts are stirred.



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

*GOSPEL READING LUKE 23:33-43

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

³³ When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ [[Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”]] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵ And the people stood by watching, but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!” ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷ and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” ³⁸ There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.” ⁴³ He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY *Amazing Love (You Are My King)

Verse: I'm forgiven because you were forsaken
I'm accepted, you were condemned
And I'm alive and well, your Spirit is within me
Because you died and rose again (*Repeat*)

Chorus: Amazing love, how can it be
That you, my King, should die for me?
Amazing love, and I know it's true
And it's my joy to honor you
In all I do, to honor you

Verse: I'm forgiven because you were forsaken
I'm accepted, you were condemned
And I'm alive and well, your Spirit is within me
Because you died and rose again

Chorus: Amazing love, how can it be
That you, my king, should die for me?
Amazing love, and I know it's true
And it's my joy to honor you
In all I do, to honor you
In all I do, to honor you

Bridge: You are my King
You are my King
Jesus, you are my King
You are my King

Chorus: Amazing love, how can it be
That you, my King, should die for me?
Amazing love, and I know it's true
And it's my joy to honor you

Chorus: Amazing love, how can it be
That you, my King, should die for me?
Amazing love, and I know it's true
And it's my joy to honor you
In all I do, to honor you
In all I do, to honor you
In all I do, let me honor you

***NICENE CREED**

Let us confess our faith using the words of the Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,

**the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

**the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven**

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*

**who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

*Or, "who proceeds from the Father." The phrase "and the Son" is a later addition to the creed.

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Gathered with one voice, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church in the world, its leaders, and its mission to share the good news of healing and restoration. Inspire us to embody the beloved community in ways that faithfully witness to the Holy Spirit. We pray for this part of the body of Christ gathered around word and sacrament. Bring us into authentic community where all ages are valued and experience God's faithfulness together. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for the trembling mountains and glad streams of creation. Preserve and renew your coastlines, deep seas, forests, and grasslands. Guide all who tend flocks or care for creatures of all kinds. We pray for leaders and advocates in government, civic life, and public safety. Support equity across the globe, and heal division with accountability and truth. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for any who are hungry, living in poverty or desperation, weary in body or spirit, or sick, especially Geneva, Cherry, Winnie, Henry, Harry, Sally, Katie, Debi, Anne, Karen, Nan, Beverly, Mike and those on our prayer list. Comfort all in need of your tender care. We give thanks for all who have died in faith. May we remember them faithfully until we are gathered with you in the paradise you promise. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of life, you always hear our cry. Restore us with your everlasting mercy, and receive the prayer gathered before you now with the prayers on the hearts of this congregation today. Into your precious keeping we entrust our prayer. **Amen.**

***PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

Let us share Christ's peace with one another.

You are invited to turn to those around you and offer a word of peace as we prepare to receive God's grace in communion. We suggest a handshake and saying, "Peace be with you." You are also welcome to offer another gesture of peace (wave, fist-bump, smile, etc.).

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ

COLLECTION OF THE OFFERING

Collected monetary offerings will be distributed to the designated church. All undesignated offerings will be split between the churches.

MUSICAL OFFERTORY *Beautiful Things*

1. All this pain
I wonder if I'll ever find my way?
I wonder if my life could really change at all?

Refrain

*You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of us*

2. All this Earth
Could all that is lost ever be found?
Could a garden come up from this ground at all?

Refrain

*You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of us*

3. All around
Hope is springing up from this old ground
Out of chaos, life is being found in You

Refrain

*You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of us*

PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS *Let the Vineyards* (ELW 182)



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of
bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be
fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u -
nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

***OFFERING PRAYER**

Please pray with me.

**God, we cherished what we thought belonged only to us:
our money, our time, our families, and our freedom.**

Yet in a moment, we recognize that every truly good thing was a treasure we had taken from
your open hand. We thought such treasures were ours to earn and to own.

You bless those who are hungry, promising to fill them with good things.

Fulfill that promise through us and these your gifts.

Nourish us with the abundance of your feast

and unite us into the blessed body of Jesus Christ our Savior, now and forever. Amen.

***GREAT THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Holy God, as soon as you made humankind, you loved them.

From the first human mistake, you planned the path to salvation.

Yet even when you set clear signs of promise in sky or stars,
in the mouths of prophets, or the faces of a newborn,
people still felt astonished to receive your goodness.

Jesus, at your birth your parents greeted you with wonder.

On the cross, your enemies crushed you, then marveled as you exuded grace.

And on the night in which you were betrayed, Jesus, you took bread and gave thanks,
broke it, and gave it to your disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, you took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people
for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

And so we gather around this bread and cup, your body and blood

As disciples gathering to be in your community,
gathering to be fed and nourished, gathering to be filled with your grace.

Holy Spirit, we may not feel the fire of your presence,

but pour yourself out upon this bread and this cup.

And fill those gathered here with your holiness so we may be
crumbs of your mercy and drops of your goodness.

Make us your people, who can never separate from you again.

Gather us into one and teach us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

**and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

*INVITATION TO COMMUNION

People of God, you are Christ's people:
tied to Jesus in his death and made new in his resurrection.

So listen to the promise prepared for you in this moment:

Even when you feel dead, you are alive;
even when you have done wrong, God forgives you.

And even when you feel unwelcome or unworthy,
Jesus brings you to the table where you can find new community.

Come and take your place at the feast that never ends.

Grape juice and gluten free wafers are available upon request. Communion may also be brought back to the pews for those who are unable to come forward.

COMMUNION SONG *Lamb of God*



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;

you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

COMMUNION HYMN *You Satisfy the Hungry Heart (ELW 484)*



- 1 As when the shep - herd calls his sheep, they know and heed his voice;
- 2 With joy - ful lips we sing to you our praise and grat - i - tude
- 3 Is not the cup we bless and share the blood of Christ out - poured?
- 4 The mys - t'ry of your pres - ence, Lord, no mor - tal tongue can tell:
- 5 You give your - self to us, O Lord; then self - less let us be,



so when you call your fam - 'ly, Lord, we fol - low and re - joice.
 that you should count us wor - thy, Lord, to share this heav'n - ly food.
 Do not one cup, one loaf, de - clare our one - ness in the Lord?
 whom all the world can - not con - tain comes in our hearts to dwell.
 to serve each oth - er in your name in truth and char - i - ty.

COMMUNION HYMN *I Received the Living God* (ELW 477)

Refrain



I re - ceived the liv - ing God, and my heart is full of joy.



I re - ceived the liv - ing God, and my heart is full of joy.



1 Je - sus said: I am the bread, knead - ed long to give you life;
2 Je - sus said: I am the way, and my Fa - ther longs for you;
3 Je - sus said: I am the truth; come and fol - low close to me.
4 Je - sus said: I am the life, far from whom no thing can grow,



Refrain

you who will par - take of me need not ev - er fear to die.
so I come to bring you home to be one with us a - new.
You will know me in your heart, and my word shall make you free.
but re - ceive this liv - ing bread, and my Spir - it you shall know.

*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

*BLESSING

May God who comes among us, the blessed and holy Trinity, God the Sovereign, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness, and good news to share today and always. **Amen.**

***SENDING SONG *How Great Thou Art* (ELW 856)**



1 O Lord my God, when I in awe - some won - der con - sid - er
 2 When through the woods and for - est glades I wan - der, I hear the
 3 But when I think that God, his Son not spar - ing, sent him to
 4 When Christ shall come, with shout of ac - cla - ma - tion, and take me



all the works thy hand hath made, I see the stars, I hear the might-y
 birds sing sweet-ly in the trees; when I look down from loft - y moun-tain
 die, I scarce can take it in, that on the cross my bur-den glad-ly
 home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in hum-ble ad - o -



thun - der, thy pow'r through-out the u - ni - verse dis - played;
 gran - deur and hear the brook and feel the gen - tle breeze;
 bear - ing he bled and died to take a - way my sin;
 ra - tion and there pro - claim, "My God, how great thou art!"

Refrain



Then sings my soul, my Sav - ior God, to thee, how great thou



art! How great thou art! Then sings my soul, my Sav - ior God, to



thee, how great thou art! How great thou art!

***DISMISSAL**

"Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent me, I also send you."

John 20:21

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The flowers on the altar today were supplied by Denise and Jim Hager in celebration of Nancy McCormick's birthday.

Assisting in worship today:

Mars Area Youth Group

Mars Area Kids Club

Notes for the day's texts:

Jesus' true identity seems to remain a mystery for most of the disciples. Jesus can teach, preach, heal, cast out demons, challenge authority and more, but still they do not comprehend. You might say it is a case of mistaken identity as the disciples and other followers seem to be hoping to discover something very different from the real Jesus. It is the criminal executed with Jesus who in his dying desperation says, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Clearly, the criminal has no other hope, still in this moment he acknowledges Jesus' true identity.

Modern followers of Jesus resemble those ancient followers in many ways. Everyone has their own image of Jesus, the gifts we want Jesus to bring us, the ways we want Jesus to fix those things in our lives that cause pain or suffering. In our anxiety we want Jesus to be our magical savior. It can be frustrating when we discover a very different Jesus. Instead of one who fixes everything in an instant, Jesus is the one who walks with us through the darkest valleys. Jesus is the one who calls us to lives of service—and again and again as we care for the needs of others we discover the face of Jesus himself in the lost, the last, and the least.

Our sin gets in the way, yet those who profess Jesus as Christ the King—the one in whom the fullness of God was pleased to dwell—are forever seeking to be clear in heart, mind, and soul about the true nature of his identity, and how we can share that identity with others.

Today's Music

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Next Week's Readings

Isaiah 2:1-5 *Weapons of war transformed into instruments of peace*

Psalms 122 *I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." (Ps. 122:1)*

Romans 13:11-14 *Salvation is near; time to wake from sleep*

Matthew 24:36-44 *The sudden coming of the Son of Man*