

*Rejoice, now, all heavenly powers!  
Sing, choirs of angels!  
Exult all creation around God's throne!*



*Jesus Christ is risen!*

**St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Vigil of Easter – April 4, 2026**

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## OPENING WORDS

Friends in Christ, on this night when our Savior Jesus Christ passed from death to life, we gather with the church throughout the world in vigil and prayer. We begin our evening remembering the death of Jesus so that we may also remember his resurrection.

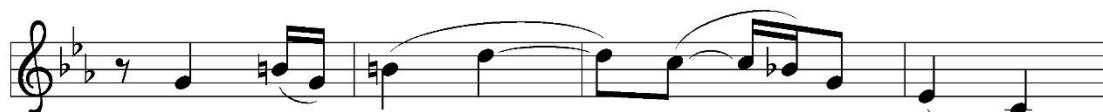
### Matthew 27:57-61

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who also was himself a disciple of Jesus.<sup>58</sup> He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.<sup>59</sup> So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth<sup>60</sup> and laid it in his new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.<sup>61</sup> Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

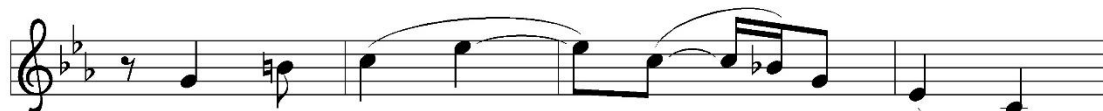
### GATHERING SONG *Calvary* (ELW 354)



*Refrain* Cal - va - ry, Cal - va - ry,  
1 Ev - 'ry time I think a - bout Je - sus,  
3 Don't you hear him say, "It is fin - ished!"



Cal - va - ry, Cal - va - ry,  
ev - 'ry time I think a - bout Je - sus,  
Don't you hear him say, "It is fin - ished!"



Cal - va - ry, Cal - va - ry,  
ev - 'ry time I think a - bout Je - sus;  
Don't you hear him say, "It is fin - ished!"



sure - ly he died on Cal - va - ry.  
sure - ly he died on Cal - va - ry. *Refrain*  
Sure - ly he died on Cal - va - ry. *Refrain*

*The assembly is invited to move to the outside of the church to gather around the fire.*

**\*OPENING SCRIPTURE: Matthew 26:62-66**

The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate <sup>63</sup> and said, “Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ <sup>64</sup> Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise, his disciples may go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception would be worse than the first.” <sup>65</sup> Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can.” <sup>66</sup> So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

Here ends the reading.

Today we pause. We pause in reflection of Jesus death as we wait outside the sealed tomb. But even as we remember the story of his death, we remember Christ’s resurrection. And tonight, as we anticipate Christ’s resurrection, we remember the life-saving action of God throughout all time. Through light and the word, through water and oil, bread and wine, we proclaim Christ's death and resurrection, share Christ's triumph over sin and death, and await Christ's coming again in glory.

And now, as we gather around this fire, we remember the new life we have in Christ, and we pray God’s love may spread in our hearts as this light and fire spreads among us.

Let us pray. Eternal God, in Jesus Christ you have given the light of life to the world. Bless this new fire, and increase in us a desire to shine forth with the brightness of Christ's rising, until we feast at the banquet of eternal life; through the son of righteousness, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*During the following prayer, the inscription on the paschal candle is traced.*

Christ, yesterday and today,	+
the beginning	A
and the ending.	Ω
To Christ belongs all time	2
and all the ages;	0
to Christ belongs glory and dominion	2
now and forever.	6

**Amen.**

*The worship leader lights the paschal and says:*

The light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the shadows of our hearts and minds.

## \*PROCESSION

*The procession begins, led by the paschal candle. At the beginning, midpoint, and end of the procession, the cantor sings, with the congregation responding:*

*As the procession enters the church, light from the paschal candle is passed.*



## \*EASTER PROCLAMATION (*chanted*)

Rejoice, now, all heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!

Exult, all creation around God's throne! Jesus Christ is risen!

Celebrate the divine mysteries with exultation;

and for so great a victory, sound the trumpet of salvation.

Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor, radiant in the brightness of your king!

Christ has conquered! Glory fills you! Darkness vanishes forever.

Rejoice, O holy church! Exult in glory! The risen Savior shines upon you!

Let this place resound with joy, echoing the mighty song of all God's people.

The Lord be with you.

Assembly



Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Assembly



It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
that with full devotion of heart and mind and voice  
we should praise the invisible God, and the only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;  
who, by his precious blood, redeemed us from bondage to the ancient sin.  
For this indeed is the Paschal Feast in which the true Lamb is slain,  
by whose blood the doorposts of the faithful are made holy.

This is the night in which, in ancient times,  
you delivered our forebears, the children of Israel, and led them, dry-shod, through the sea.

This is the night in which the darkness of sin  
has been purged away by the rising brightness.

This is the night in which all who believe in Christ  
are rescued from evil and the gloom of sin,  
are renewed in grace, and are restored to holiness.

This is the night in which, breaking the chains of death, Christ arises from hell in triumph.  
O night truly blessed which alone was worthy to know  
the time and hour in which Christ arose again from hell!  
This is the night of which it is written: "The night is as clear as the day,"  
and, "then shall my night be turned into day."  
The holiness of this night puts to flight the deeds of wickedness;  
washes away sin; restores innocence to the fallen,  
and joy to those who mourn; casts out hate; brings peace; and humbles earthly pride.

Therefore, in this night of grace, receive, O God, our praise and thanksgiving  
for the light of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
reflected in the burning of this candle.  
We sing the glories of this pillar of fire, the brightness of which is not diminished  
even when its light is divided and borrowed.  
For it is fed by the melting wax which the bees, your servants,  
have made for the substance of this candle.  
This is the night in which heaven and earth are joined—things human and things divine.  
We, therefore, pray to you, O God, that this candle, burning to the honor of your name,  
will continue to vanquish the darkness of night and be mingled with the lights of heaven.  
May Christ the Morning Star find it burning, that Morning Star who never sets,  
that Morning Star who, rising from the grave,  
faithfully sheds light on the whole human race.

And we pray, O God, rule, govern, and preserve  
with your continual protection your whole church,  
giving us peace in this time of our paschal rejoicing;  
through the same Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



A - men.

#### **\*PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray. **Eternal giver of life and light, this holy night shines with the radiance of the risen Christ. Renew your church with the Spirit given us in baptism, that we may worship you in sincerity and truth and may shine as a light in the world, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

*Candles may be extinguished.*

#### **REFLECTION**

As we sit in vigil, we hear the stories of God's people. We hear the ancient stories of our faith, remembering God's boundless mercy and care for God's people throughout the ages. We begin in the beginning.

## READING: Genesis 1:1-2:4A

<sup>1:1</sup>In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.



Christ, our God, to thee we raise this our sac - ri - fice of praise.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." <sup>7</sup>So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.



Christ, our God, to thee we raise this our sac - ri - fice of praise.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.



Christ, our God, to thee we raise this our sac - ri - fice of praise.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night — and the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.



Christ, our God, to thee we raise this our sac - ri - fice of praise.

<sup>20</sup>And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." <sup>21</sup>So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." <sup>23</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.



Christ, our God, to thee we raise this our sac - ri - fice of praise.

<sup>24</sup>And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. <sup>25</sup>God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." <sup>27</sup>So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup>God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." <sup>29</sup>God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup>And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. <sup>31</sup>God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.



Christ, our God, to thee we raise this our sac - ri - fice of praise.

<sup>2:1</sup>Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. <sup>2</sup>And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. <sup>3</sup>So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

<sup>4a</sup>These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

**RESPONSE** *For the Beauty of the Earth* (ELW 879) vs 1 AND 3



1 For the beau - ty of the earth, for the beau - ty of the skies,

3 For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's de - light,



for the love which from our birth o - ver and a - round us lies:

for the mys - tic har - mo - ny link - ing sense to sound and sight:

*Refrain*



Christ, our God, to thee we raise this our sac - ri - fice of praise.

## **BUT THEN...**

### **But then what happened??**

God saw that it was very good, and God rested.

But then people forgot. They forgot about God. They forgot about the inherent goodness of creation. Violence, corruption, hate, jealousy all pushed against God's intent for this world. Cain and Abel stand as a reminder of how quickly we forget.

More violence, more corruption, more hate, more jealousy, more times when God's good creation was abused, when God was forgotten.

### **God was forgotten?? What did God do??**

Then there was Noah and his family, an ark, a bunch of animals, lots of rain, and a divine reset.

But then a promise.

Never again. Never again would God destroy creation. To remember, to mark the promise, a rainbow was placed in the sky, and Noah's family grew and grew and grew, filling the earth again.

God blessed the descendants of Noah. When Abraham came, it seemed as though God's blessing had run out. To imagine a son at such an old age was laughable. But God promised a son, and Isaac was born. Through Isaac, Abraham's family grew and grew and grew. And again, God blessed the generations, making them a new kind of nation, one intended to bless all other nations.

### **Did they live happily ever after then??**

But then two more sons were ensnared in conflict: Jacob and Esau. Again, corruption, hate, jealousy. But then out of God's grace, forgiveness and reconciliation once again Abraham and Sarah's descendants thrived in God's good creation.

But then more conflict and animosity and jealousy, this time between Jacob's sons. But again, God worked through them so that all of God's people thrived in Egypt.... until they didn't. God's people were blessed and multiplied, but this threatened the Egyptians. So the Egyptians enslaved God's people.

### **But they were God's people! What did God do??**

God never forgot about God's good creation. God never forgot about the people to whom God promised abundant life. And then God called a man named Moses to lead God's people out of slavery, to "Let my people go."

But then... just as they were out of the hands of the Pharaoh, Pharaoh sent his army after them...

## READING: Exodus 14:10–31; 15:20–21

*Please join in reading aloud together the bolded words*

<sup>14:10</sup>As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the LORD. <sup>11</sup>They said to Moses, "**Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup>Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.**" <sup>13</sup>But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. <sup>14</sup>The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still."

<sup>15</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. <sup>16</sup>But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. <sup>17</sup>Then I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers. <sup>18</sup>And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot drivers."

<sup>19</sup>The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. <sup>20</sup>It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

<sup>21</sup>Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. <sup>22</sup>The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. <sup>23</sup>The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. <sup>24</sup>At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. <sup>25</sup>He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "**Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt.**"

<sup>26</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." <sup>27</sup>So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. <sup>28</sup>The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. <sup>29</sup>But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

*(continued)*

<sup>30</sup>Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup>Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

<sup>15:20</sup>Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. <sup>21</sup>And Miriam sang to them:

"Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;  
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

**RESPONSE *Light Dawns on a Weary World* (ELW 726)**



1 Light dawns on a wea - ry world when eyes be - gin to  
2 Love grows in a wea - ry world when hun - gry hearts find  
3 Hope blooms in a wea - ry world when crea-tures, once for -



see all peo - ple's dig - ni - ty. Light dawns on a  
bread and chil - dren's dreams are fed. Love grows in a  
loam, find wil - der - ness re - born. Hope blooms in a



wea - ry world: the prom-ised day of jus - tice comes.  
wea - ry world: the prom-ised feast of plen - ty comes.  
wea - ry world: the prom-ised green of E - den comes.



The trees shall clap their hands; the dry lands, gush with springs;



the hills and moun-tains shall break forth with sing - ing!



We shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace,



as all the world in won-der ech - oes sha - lom.

## **BUT THEN...**

But then the people forgot who they were. They faced exile and oppression. They felt dried up, lifeless, hopeless.

## **How could they forget?? Then what happened??**

But then God sent prophets to remind the people who they were, that they were made in the image of God, a God who could bring life even in the face of death.

One day, God took the prophet Ezekiel to a valley full of dry bones.

“Can these bones live?” God said. Ezekiel didn’t know what to say.

So God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones, to tell them to hear the word of God, that God would breathe life into them once again.

And then God did just that.

God reminded the people again, there is always hope in God. God always brings life.

## **So now they lived happily ever after??**

And God brings life even beyond those who thought it exclusively applied to them... but that was a hard message for them to learn.

God sent Jonah to deliver God’s message of life and love for EVERYONE. Jonah tried his best to avoid it... there was a boat... a storm... a whale... actually let’s hear that story... it’s a good one!

## **READING: Jonah 1:1-2:1**

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before me.” <sup>3</sup> But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

<sup>4</sup> But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup> Then the sailors were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. <sup>6</sup> The captain came and said to him, “What are you doing sound asleep? Get up; call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.”

<sup>7</sup> The sailors said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. <sup>8</sup> Then they said to him, “Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” <sup>9</sup> “I am a Hebrew,” he replied. “I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made

the sea and the dry land.”<sup>10</sup> Then the men were even more afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them so.

<sup>11</sup> Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. <sup>12</sup> He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.” <sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. <sup>14</sup> Then they cried out to the Lord, “Please, O Lord, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.” <sup>15</sup> So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. <sup>16</sup> Then the men feared the Lord even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

<sup>17</sup> But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

<sup>2:1</sup> Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish.

### RESPONSE *Create in Me* (ELW 186)

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right  
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your pres - ence, and take  
not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re - store to me the joy of  
your sal - va - tion, and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

Jonah did eventually go to Ninevah, the capital of a country that was controlling God’s people... and not in kind ways. He delivered God’s message of redemption to this seemingly irredeemable people. And much to Jonah’s dismay, they heard God’s word of life, they listened, and they were forgiven.

## **Why didn't Jonah want them to be forgiven??**

Jonah tried to control God's message. He didn't want to think that God cared for people who weren't like him and his people... people they didn't like... even people who were mean to them. He was angry that God would care for *those* people, and his anger distracted him from appreciating his role in God's beautiful gift of forgiveness for the people of Nineveh.

## **Who else did God save?**

Once upon a time, there was a King named Nebuchadnezzar. He ruled over God's people. He forced them to bow down whenever he commanded. He forced them to worship a statue he made... but not everyone obeyed King Nebuchadnezzar. And that made King Nebuchadnezzar so mad!

But even in the face of fire, God's presence and promise was for all... It's easier to just hear that whole story.

## **READING: Daniel 3:1-29**

<sup>1</sup>King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue whose height was sixty cubits and whose width was six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup>Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent for the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to assemble and come to the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. <sup>3</sup>So the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. When they were standing before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, <sup>4</sup>the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, <sup>5</sup>that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. <sup>6</sup>Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire." <sup>7</sup>Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

<sup>8</sup>Accordingly, at this time certain Chaldeans came forward and denounced the Jews. <sup>9</sup>They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! <sup>10</sup>You, O king, have made a decree, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, shall fall down and worship the golden statue, <sup>11</sup>and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire. <sup>12</sup>There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These pay no heed to you, O king. They do not serve your gods and they do not worship the golden statue that you have set up."

*(continued)*

<sup>13</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought in; so they brought those men before the king. <sup>14</sup>Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up? <sup>15</sup>Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?"

<sup>16</sup>Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. <sup>17</sup>If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. <sup>18</sup>But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up."

<sup>19</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace heated up seven times more than was customary, <sup>20</sup>and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. <sup>21</sup>So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics, their trousers, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. <sup>22</sup>Because the king's command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. <sup>23</sup>But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.

<sup>24</sup>Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counselors, "Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king." <sup>25</sup>He replied, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth has the appearance of a god."

<sup>26</sup>Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire.

<sup>27</sup>And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their tunics were not harmed, and not even the smell of fire came from them. <sup>28</sup>Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. <sup>29</sup>Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that utters blasphemy against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins; for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way."

**RESPONSE *My Life Flows On in Endless Song* (ELW 763) vs 1 and 4**



1 My life flows on in end - less song; a - bove earth's lam-en - ta - tion,

4 The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a foun - tain ev - er spring-ing!



I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new cre - a - tion.

All things are mine since I am his! How can I keep from sing-ing?

*Refrain*



No storm can shake my in-most calm while to that Rock I'm cling-ing.



Since Christ is Lord of heav-en and earth, how can I keep from sing-ing?

**READING: Isaiah 55:1–11**

<sup>1</sup>Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;  
and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup>Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.

<sup>3</sup>Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.

<sup>4</sup>See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander for the peoples.

<sup>5</sup>See, you shall call nations that you do not know,  
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,  
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has glorified you.

<sup>6</sup>Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near;

<sup>7</sup>let the wicked forsake their way,  
and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

<sup>8</sup>For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

<sup>9</sup>For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

<sup>10</sup>For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

<sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

## MANY YEARS LATER...

Many years after all this happened, Paul wrote letters to the people of God. He reminded them again, as they had been reminded before, God has been present through all history: it's ups and downs, in moments of distraction and reorientation. And surely, God's presence extends through to our story today. God still cares for God's good creation. God's promise of new, abundant life stands firm. And nothing, not even death can separate us from God's love.

## NEW TESTAMENT READING: Romans 6:1-11

*Contemporary English Bible*

<sup>1</sup>So what are we going to say? Should we continue sinning so grace will multiply?  
<sup>2</sup>Absolutely not! All of us died to sin. How can we still live in it? <sup>3</sup>Or don't you know that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore, we were buried together with him through baptism into his death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too can walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>If we were united together in a death like his, we will also be united together in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup>This is what we know: the person that we used to be was crucified with him in order to get rid of the corpse that had been controlled by sin. That way we wouldn't be slaves to sin anymore, <sup>7</sup>because a person who has died has been freed from sin's power. <sup>8</sup>But if we died with Christ, we have faith that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup>We know that Christ has been raised from the dead and he will never die again. Death no longer has power over him. <sup>10</sup>He died to sin once and for all with his death, but he lives for God with his life. <sup>11</sup>In the same way, you also should consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

## \*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Hal-le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal -  
- le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le -  
lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah.

Not even death can separate us from love. And this night, as we stand vigil for the transition Good Friday to Easter, from death to resurrection, we hear one more story, the story that stands at the center of who we are as Christ's followers, as Christians.

**\*GOSPEL: John 20:1-18**

The Good News according to John:

<sup>1</sup>Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. <sup>2</sup>So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." <sup>3</sup>Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup>The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup>He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup>and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup>Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup>for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup>Then the disciples returned to their homes.

<sup>11</sup>But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; <sup>12</sup>and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. <sup>13</sup>They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." <sup>14</sup>When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup>Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" <sup>18</sup>Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

**Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

**\*HYMN OF THE DAY *Christ Is Risen! Alleluia!* (ELW 382)**

*During the hymn, those who wish may move to the chancel, gathering around the font.*



1. Christ is ris-en! Al - le - lu - ia! Ris - en our vic - to - rious head!  
 2. Christ is ris-en! All the sad-ness of our Lent - en fast is o'er;  
 3. Christ is ris-en! All the sor-row that last eve-ning round him lay  
 4. Christ is ris-en! Hence-forth nev-er death or hell shall us en - thrall.



Sing his prais-es! Al - le - lu - ia! Christ is ris - en from the dead!  
 through the o - pen gates of glad-ness he re-turms to life once more;  
 now has found a glo-rious mor-row in the ris - ing of to - day.  
 We are Christ's, in him for - ev - er we have tri-umphed o - ver all.



Grate-ful - ly our hearts a - dore him as his light once more ap - pears;  
 death and hell be - fore him bend-ing see him rise, the vic - tor now,  
 See the grave its first-fruits giv - ing, spring-ing up from ho - ly ground;  
 All the doubt-ing and de - jec - tion of our trem-bling hearts have ceased;



bow - ing down in joy be-fore him, ris - ing up from griefs and tears.  
 an - gels on his steps at-tend - ing, glo - ry round his wound - ed brow.  
 Christ was dead but now is liv - ing; he was lost, be he is found.  
 hail the day of re - sur - rec - tion! Let us rise and keep the feast.

*REFRAIN*



Christ is ris - en! Al - le - lu - ia! Ris - en our vic - to - rious head!



Sing his prais-es! Al - le - lu - ia! Christ is ris - en from the dead!

**\*PROFESSION OF FAITH**

Water! We praise you, O God, for water, water that brings life and healing. We praise you for this water that brings us together as your children, bathed in forgiveness and enlivened in the Spirit through the gift of baptism.

**Amen.**

Dear friends, let us come before God and one another to make public affirmation of our baptism into Christ, professing our faith in Christ Jesus, rejecting sin, and confessing the faith of the church.

Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?

**I renounce them.**

Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?

**I renounce them.**

Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?

**I renounce them.**

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.**

You have made public profession of your faith.

Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

to live among God's faithful people,

to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,

to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,

to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,

and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

**I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.**

People of God, do you promise to support and pray for one another in your life in Christ?

**We do, and we ask God to help and guide us.**

Let us pray.

**We give you thanks, O God,**

**that through water and the Holy Spirit you give us new birth,**

**cleanse us from sin, and raise us to eternal life.**

**Stir up in your people the gift of your Holy Spirit:**

**the spirit of wisdom and understanding,**

**the spirit of counsel and might,**

**the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord,**

**the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever.**

**Amen.**

## **\*PRAYERS**

Trusting in the power of Christ's resurrection to heal and redeem our broken world, let us pray for the needs of all creation. *A brief silence.*

For the church universal, that all who have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection may journey together in newness of life, boldly proclaiming the good news of deliverance. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

For the well-being of all creation, that the power that brought forth all life may renew the earth. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

For the nations and those in authority, that they may be transformed by the love of Christ and work together for the peace and freedom you have promised to all peoples. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

For all who suffer in poverty, pain, or despair, that like your people in Egypt, they may be set free to live abundantly in the promised land of your love. We especially pray for Geneva, Cherry, Henry, Harry, Sally, Debi, Anne, Karen, Nan, Beverly, those on our prayer list, all whom we remember aloud or in our hearts and all who suffer in any way. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

For this congregation, that we who have passed over from death to life through baptism may, like Mary Magdalene, share the good news of Christ's resurrection in word and deed. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We give thanks for the faithful departed, trusting that all who died with Christ live with him forever, sharing fully in Christ's victory over sin, death, and the grave. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of resurrection power, use us and these prayers to proclaim the good news of new life to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Savior.

**Amen.**

## **PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**\*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.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
that we should at all times and in all places  
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,  
for the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ,  
the true Paschal Lamb who gave himself to take away our sin;  
who in dying has destroyed death,  
and in rising has brought us to eternal life.

And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection,  
with earth and sea and all their creatures,  
and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



1\*  
Du är he - lig, du är hel. Du är all - tid myck-et mer  
You are ho - ly, you are whole. You are al - ways ev - er more



än vi nån - sin kan för - stå, du är nä - ra än - då.  
than we ev - er un - der - stand. You are al - ways at hand.



Väl - sig - nad va - re du som kom - mer hit just nu,  
Bless - ed are you com - ing near. Bless - ed are you com - ing here



väl - sig - na - de vår jord, blir till bröd på vår jord.  
to your church in wine and bread, raised from soil, raised from dead.



2  
Du är he - lig, du är hel - het,  
You are ho - ly, you are whole - ness,



du är när - het he - la kos - mos lo - var dig!  
you are pres - ent. Let the cos - mos praise you, Lord!



Ho - si - an - na, ho - si - an - na,  
Sing ho - san - na in the high - est!



ho - si - an - na, ho - si - an - na vår Gud.  
Sing ho - san - na! Sing ho - san - na to our God!

Blessed are you, O God of the universe. Your mercy is everlasting and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

You created the heavens and the earth. **Alleluia!**  
You saved the earth from the waters of the flood. **Alleluia!**  
You brought the Israelites safely through the sea. **Alleluia!**  
You led your people into the land of milk and honey. **Alleluia!**

Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one.  
Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ.  
Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.  
**Alleluia!**

To explain God's love, to show it and share it,  
In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he 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.

With this bread and cup we remember our Lord's passover from death to life  
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:  
**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread.  
Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world.  
Breathe new life into us.  
Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love.  
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With your holy ones of all times and places,  
with the earth and all its creatures,  
we praise you, O God,  
blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever.  
**Alleluia! Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us 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**

Now let us feast in God's grace.  
Come and taste the truth of God's love.  
**Alleluia!**

**COMMUNION SONG *Lamb of God***

O Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;  
have mer-cy on us. O Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; have mer-cy on us. O Lamb of God,  
you take a - way the sin of the world; grant us your peace.

**DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION**

## COMMUNION HYMN *Bread of Life from Heaven* (ELW 474)

*Refrain*



Bread of life from heav-en, your blood and bod - y giv - en, we



eat this bread and drink this cup un - til you come a - gain.



1 Break now the bread of Christ's sac - ri - fice; giv - ing  
 2 Seek not the food that will pass a - way; set your  
 3 Love as the one who, in love for you, gave him -  
 4 Dwell in the one who now dwells in you; make your  
 5 Drink of this cup and de - clare his death; eat this



thanks, hun - gry ones, gath - er round. Eat, all of you, and be  
 hearts on the food that en - dures. Come, learn the true and the  
 self for the life of the world. Come to the one who is  
 home in the life - giv - ing Word. Know on - ly Christ, Ho - ly  
 bread and be - lieve Eas - ter morn; trust his re - turn and, with



sat - is - fied; in Christ's pres - ence the loaves will a - bound.  
 liv - ing way, that the full - ness of life may be yours.  
 food for you, that your hun - ger and thirst be no more.  
 One of God, and be - lieve in the truth you have heard.  
 ev - 'ry breath, praise the one in whom you are re - born.

*Refrain*

### **\*POST-COMMUNION BLESSING**

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in grace.  
**Amen.**

**\*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Let us pray.

Life-giving God,  
in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection  
you send the bread of heaven to nourish your people.  
Send us forth as witnesses to Jesus' resurrection  
that we may show your glory to all the world;  
through the same Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.  
**Amen.**

**\*BLESSING**

The God of steadfastness and encouragement  
grant you to live in harmony with one another,  
in accordance with Christ Jesus.

**Alleluia!**

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Alleluia!**

The God of all grace ✝ bless you now and forever.

**Alleluia!**

**\*SENDING SONG *Christ the Lord is Risen Today; Alleluia!* (ELW 369)**



1 Christ the Lord is ris'n to - day; Al - le - lu - ia!  
 2 For the sheep the Lamb has bled, Al - le - lu - ia!  
 3 Christ, the vic - tim un - de - filed, Al - le - lu - ia!  
 4 Chris-tians, on this ho - ly day, Al - le - lu - ia!



Chris-tians, has - ten on your way; Al - le - lu - ia!  
 sin - less in the sin - ner's stead. Al - le - lu - ia!  
 God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled, Al - le - lu - ia!  
 all your grate - ful hom - age pay; Al - le - lu - ia!



of - fer praise with love re - plete, Al - le - lu - ia!  
 Christ the Lord is ris'n on high; Al - le - lu - ia!  
 when con - tend - ing death and life, Al - le - lu - ia!  
 Christ the Lord is ris'n on high; Al - le - lu - ia!



at the pas - chal vic - tim's feet. Al - le - lu - ia!  
 now he lives, no more to die. Al - le - lu - ia!  
 met in strange and awe - some strife. Al - le - lu - ia!  
 now he lives, no more to die. Al - le - lu - ia!

**\*DISMISSAL**

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Go in peace. Christ is with you. Alleluia, alleluia!

**Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!**

**POSTLUDE**

### Today's Music

*Calvary*. Text: African American spiritual, Music: African American spiritual. Public Domain.

*For the Beauty of the Earth*. Text: Folliott S. Pierpoint, 1835-1917, alt.,

Music: Conrad Kocher, 1786-1872. Public Domain.

*Christ Is Risen! Alleluia!* Text: John S. B. Monsell, 1811–1875, alt., Music: Frederick C. Maker, 1844–1927. Public Domain.

*Light Dawns on a Weary World*. Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953, Music: William P. Rowan, b. 1951. GIA Publications, Inc.

*My Life Flows On in Endless Song*. Text: Robert Lowry, 1826-1899, Music: Robert Lowry, alt. Public Domain.

*Create in Me*. Music © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress

*Bread of Life from Heaven*. Text: Susan R. Briehl, b. 1952, Music: Argentine traditional, refrain; Marty Haugen, b. 1950, stanzas. GIA Publications, Inc.

*Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia!* Text: attr. Wipo of Burgundy, d. c. 1050; tr. Jane E. Leeson, 1807–1882, alt., Music: Robert Williams, 1781–1821. Public Domain.

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