

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH  
LENTEN MIDWEEK SERVICE  
March 16, 2022  
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PRELUDE

*Jesus, Refuge of the Weary*  
Setting: J. Wayne Kerr

VESPER VERSE (Stand)

p.229

O Lord, open my lips,  
**and my mouth will declare Your praise.**

Make haste, O God, to deliver me;  
**make haste to help me, O Lord.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.  
Praise to You, O Christ, Lamb of our salvation.**

LENTEN HYMN #423

*Jesus, Refuge of the Weary*

- 1 Jesus, refuge of the weary,  
Blest Redeemer, whom we love,  
Fountain in life's desert dreary,  
Savior from the world above:  
Often have Your eyes, offended,  
Gazed upon the sinner's fall;  
Yet upon the cross extended,  
You have borne the pain of all.
  
- 2 Do we pass that cross unheeding,  
Breathing no repentant vow,  
Though we see You wounded, bleeding,  
See Your thorn-encircled brow?  
Yet Your sinless death has brought us  
Life eternal, peace, and rest;  
Only what Your grace has taught us  
Calms the sinner's deep distress.
  
- 3 Jesus, may our hearts be burning  
With more fervent love for You;  
May our eyes be ever turning  
To behold Your cross anew  
Till in glory, parted never  
From the blessed Savior's side,  
Graven in our hearts forever,  
Dwell the cross, the Crucified.

Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.

But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house." Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house."

As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

RESPONSORY (Stand)

p. 231

Deliver me, O Lord, my God, for You are the God of my salvation.

**Rescue me from my enemies, protect me from those who rise against me.**

In You, O Lord, do I put my trust, leave me not, O Lord, my God.

**Rescue me from my enemies, protect me from those who rise against me.**

Deliver me, O Lord, my God, for You are the God of my salvation.

**Rescue me from my enemies, protect me from those who rise against me.**

SECOND READING

Luke 22:31-51

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and

likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough."

And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*SERMON (Be seated)*

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen. Dear friends in Christ:

When Jesus said to his disciples: "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one," he was telling those disciples that their days ahead would soon be more difficult. The difficulty would come as they encountered more opposition. And for this opposition they would need to be prepared.

Not that they would need to take up arms in battle. A sword or two for personal protection as they traveled along their roads would be enough. Jesus was probably just speaking here figuratively anyway. His followers were not to gather weapons and form as a military, for their battles would be of a much different kind. Jesus' disciples were to battle temptations – both the temptation to sin and the temptation to lose faith.

As we later find out, the disciples would do pretty well in these battles. Armed with the training of Jesus they would boldly go forward after his resurrection and ascension and carry out the mission of making disciples as he had assigned them.

And yet, sometimes they would struggle too. Peter, for instance, would soon deny Jesus, as predicted.

With all this in mind, let us then turn our attention once again to Joseph. We've been reading through his story in our Lenten services this year. And as we heard in today's reading, Joseph, like Jesus' disciples, faced many temptations.

And how did Joseph do with these? Did he give in? Or did he stand firm?

"Miracle of miracles," to use the words of Luther, Joseph stood firm. When faced with the temptation to despair, he did not give in. And neither did he give in to the temptation of adultery.

Think about how great a miracle this was. Joseph was seventeen years old when his brothers sold him to the Ishmaelites as a slave. We don't know how long the journey to Egypt took or how long it took Joseph to rise to prominence in the house of Potiphar, but the story reads as if this all took place rather quickly. So, Joseph is a

very young man here – one at the point of life where he is physically formed as an adult, with all the vigor of youth, but without much experience.

What's more, Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And this, as we know, gave him certain advantages and also certain challenges. For some would be drawn to him, and others would hate him.

As Joseph negotiates his new life as a slave in his new home of Egypt, God is with him. First, Joseph gets put to work under an officer of Pharaoh. Not a bad place to be. Then "the LORD caused all that he did to succeed."

Miracles are abounding here. One of these is that God is paving of the path for Joseph's success. God's hand was opening doors, as we say.

And another of these, as Luther points out, is that Joseph acts with great maturity and resilience in the face of his ordeal – especially considering all that he had been through.

When the Bible says: "the Lord was with him," it's not only telling us that God was acting in Joseph's life, but also that Joseph was acting from a place of faith and obedience to God. Luther says: "Joseph is a son of God and a priest full of the Spirit of the Lord, a man of piety and the highest virtues, a man on whose account the whole of house of Potiphar is most bountifully blessed and increased."

When people act from such faith, it is a miracle indeed. For the temptations of the devil to act otherwise are strong.

Joseph, we see, was being attacked by the devil on two fronts. On one front, he was being tempted to give in to doubt, despair and defeat. Surely it must have occurred to Joseph during those early days that perhaps he had been forgotten and forsaken by God. Joseph had been betrayed by his own brothers and sold into slavery. How easy it would have been for him to abandon the faith he had been taught by his family. And how easy it would have been for him to be consumed by hatred.

On the other front, once he achieved success Joseph was tempted to take advantage of it. Things had gone very well for him in Potiphar's house. There he was, young, good-looking, in charge and well-positioned for the future. He was now tempted to indulge himself and sample forbidden fruits.

This temptation came to Joseph very directly in the person of Potiphar's wife. She had an eye for him. Was it his appearance or his confidence or his success? Maybe all of these. We don't know. But she was direct. "Lie with me."

For Joseph, what could it hurt? Sure, there was some risk. But possibly also reward. Carnal pleasure, for sure. And feelings of closeness, success, and superiority too. Luther calls it an opportunity "so convenient and full of safety, power, favor and pleasure."

But Joseph says no. And he doesn't waver or equivocate. He calls adultery what it is, saying: "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

Where does Joseph get this strength and clarity of character? From the example of his father Jacob, the deceiver? From his brothers, the betrayers? It wasn't youth group, Sunday School and Confirmation class!

"Miracle of miracles" – faith somehow reigns in the heart of this young man. It was God's Spirit at work, for sure. And, also, a young man who saw God's hand and realized where his blessings came from.

And this is the point where we remember that all this has been recorded for us. And it is to be preached and proclaimed to us. Because the temptations to despair and to imbibe are a part of our life too.

Temptations to despair are everywhere. We read the news and see story after story of violence and bloodshed, crime and injustice. Some of these touch our lives very directly too. And all this hurts us and drags us down, tempting us to lose faith.

Likewise, Potiphar's wife, with her promises of sex and sin without consequences is everywhere. She's on our television screen and computer screen. She's in our phones – the ones that never leave our sides and happily hide all our secrets. The devil trots her out continually, never quitting, never easing up in his attempt to make us violate our chastity and destroy our faith.

Joseph's encounter with her calls out to us – challenging us to make right choices. And it does this with brutal honesty too, for it reminds us that even when we do make right choices, we will still face challenges. Joseph's great faith and steadfast refusal to sin did not result in applause and accolades and promotions. Rather, his life got turned upside down. Joseph was falsely accused and quickly condemned. His good deed was punished, not rewarded. Joseph's run of success ended abruptly as he was thrown into the hell of prison.

And if that's what happened to Joseph, whose faith and life were above reproach, should we not expect far worse? With our faltering faith and sin-filled lives, should we not expect only temporal and eternal punishment?

That would be our fate. If not for our new and greater Joseph.

Our new and greater Joseph is Jesus – the one who was tempted in every way as we are yet was without sin. Jesus took on the temptations of power and despair, pleasure and pain and defeated them. He battled temptation for you – as your sacred substitute.

Where you fail, he succeeded. Where you stumble, he stood firm. Where you are weak, he was strong.

Miracle of miracles, Jesus undertakes a great exchange with you! He takes your guilt and gives you his innocence. He bears your sin and absolves you of everything. He drinks deeply from the cup of God's wrath against sin so that you might have the sweet, forgiving wine that is his blood once shed for you. He takes your punishment and dies your death so that you might die to sin and rise again to life everlasting.

Just like Joseph, Jesus humbled himself and made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a slave. Just like Joseph, Jesus went around doing good in all things. He built a kingdom, and not of Pharaoh but of God – preaching the Gospel, casting out demons, cleansing lepers, giving sight to the blind, feeding the hungry, stilling the storms, and even raising the dead.

For Jesus, like Joseph, there would be no applause or accolades or promotion. His good deeds would be punished as well. The shouts of "hosanna" would be drowned out by demands to "crucify him." His brother would betray him. His own would not receive him.

Such will also be our fate at times. This world will little note the times when you stand firm against temptation. The angels may be rejoicing but those cheers won't often reach your ears. Luther says: "you must never hope the world will acknowledge your faithfulness and diligence, for it does the opposite." Like Joseph, your good conduct could even land you in prison. Or worse.

But miracle of miracles, you are precious to the Lord. In Holy Baptism he has made your body to be a temple of the Holy Spirit and you now belong to him – body and soul – redeemed by Christ the Crucified.

Knowing this, may God then give you the strength and wisdom to stand up to temptations. And may he give you the miracle of faith, so that you trust him to care for you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

- 1 Jesus, I will ponder now  
On Your holy passion;  
With Your Spirit me endow  
For such meditation.  
Grant that I in love and faith  
May the image cherish  
Of Your suff'ring, pain, and death  
That I may not perish.
  
- 4 Grant that I Your passion view  
With repentant grieving.  
Let me not bring shame to You  
By unholy living.  
How could I refuse to shun  
Ev'ry sinful pleasure  
Since for me God's only Son  
Suffered without measure?
  
- 5 If my sins give me alarm  
And my conscience grieve me,  
Let Your cross my fear disarm;  
Peace of conscience give me.  
Help me see forgiveness won  
By Your holy passion.  
If for me He slays His Son,  
God must have compassion!
  
- 6 Graciously my faith renew;  
Help me bear my crosses,  
Learning humbleness from You,  
Peace mid pain and losses.  
May I give You love for love!  
Hear me, O my Savior,  
That I may in heav'n above  
Sing Your praise forever.

OFFERING

LITANY (Kneel)

p. 249

In peace let us pray to the Lord:  
**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord:  
**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord:  
**Lord, have mercy.**

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For Matthew, our Synod President, John, our District President, for all pastors in Christ, for all servants of the Church, and for all the people, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For Joseph, our President, for all public servants, for the government and those who protect us, that they may be upheld and strengthened in every good deed, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For those who work to bring peace, justice, health, and protection in this and every place, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For those who bring offerings, those who do good works in this congregation, those who toil, those who sing, and all the people here present who await from the Lord great and abundant mercy, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and need, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For . . . [additional bids for prayer may be inserted here] . . . let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the faithful who have gone before us and are with Christ, let us give thanks to the Lord:

**Thanks be to God.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

*Silence for individual prayer may follow.*

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ, our Lord:

**To You, O Lord.**

*COLLECT FOR PEACE*

*THE LORD'S PRAYER*

**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.**

*BENEDICAMUS AND BENEDICTION (Stand)*

Let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the ✠ Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.

**Amen.**

- 1 I lie, O Lord, within Your care,  
Awake or when I'm sleeping.  
Whoever trusts in Your strong arms  
Is safe within Your keeping.**
- 2 Lord, You alone keep constant watch;  
My restless heart You quiet.  
When darkness fills the night with fear,  
I will by faith defy it.**
- 4 It is enough that You are near;  
I need not now discover  
What hidden plans You have for me,  
My future's path uncover.**
- 5 Tomorrow's road I cannot trace  
Nor know what ills will meet me.  
You only ask that I be still  
And trust You there will greet me.**
- 6 Each dawning day to which I wake  
Will show Your hand still guiding  
And ev'ry good my life requires  
Your grace again providing.**

**THOSE SERVING:**

Greeter: Christine M Bell  
Reader: Melissa Hecht

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