

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
LENTEN MIDWEEK SERVICE
March 23, 2022
✠ ✠ ✠

PRELUDE

Go to Dark Gethsemane
Setting: David Cherwien

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 #436

Go to Dark Gethsemane

- 1 Go to dark Gethsemane,
All who feel the tempter's pow'r;
Your Redeemer's conflict see,
Watch with Him one bitter hour;
Turn not from His griefs away;
Learn from Jesus Christ to pray.
- 2 Follow to the judgment hall,
View the Lord of life arraigned;
Oh, the wormwood and the gall!
Oh, the pangs His soul sustained!
Shun not suff'ring, shame, or loss;
Learn from Him to bear the cross.
- 3 Calv'ry's mournful mountain climb;
There, adoring at His feet,
Mark that miracle of time,
God's own sacrifice complete.
"It is finished!" hear Him cry;
Learn from Jesus Christ to die.
- 4 Early hasten to the tomb
Where they laid His breathless clay;
All is solitude and gloom.
Who has taken Him away?
Christ is ris'n! He meets our eyes.
Savior, teach us so to rise.

Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "I remember my offenses today. When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine. It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about. Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine."

This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

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.

And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

"You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

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:

As we continue our Lenten journey with both Joseph and our Lord Jesus, let's begin tonight's sermon by thinking first about Joseph.

The picture we have of Joseph at this point in our readings is definitely that of a young man on the go. We have seen that he was a boy full of dreams – loved by his father – and that he grew up to be a young man brimming with confidence and faith.

Even when life got tough, after he was betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery, Joseph was able to summon up the courage to work hard and make the best of things. God was with him, yes. But Joseph certainly did his part as well. In Egypt, his new home, he went from being a lowly servant to the head manager of an important household. Joseph didn't let hard circumstances keep him down.

Today, however, we see Joseph facing a new challenge. And the challenge is a still more difficult one. For after his boss's wife falsely accused him, Joseph was thrown into prison.

By the end of the end of tonight's reading, Joseph has gotten out of prison. We see that he didn't languish there forever. But let's not zip ahead to that part of the story. Let's think, first, about what it meant for him to face the challenge of prison.

When Joseph was in prison, he was in a place where he was no longer able to change his circumstances through his hard work. No amount of energy or planning or smarts was going to change things. He just had to wait.

Joseph's wait went on for many years. We can't tell exactly how many, but at least three and probably quite a few more. When he gets out, he's 30 years old. While that is still young, especially in our times, Joseph had

also spent some very important years of his life waiting for his release. That waiting certainly had to be difficult.

And here we should do some thinking about what it means to wait.

The Bible speaks of waiting as an act of faith. Waiting is a matter of continuing to trust the Lord until he brings about his promised help.

We see this understanding, for instance, in the Psalms, which often places waiting and faith in parallel. Psalm 25 begins: To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not

be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame.” Likewise, Psalm 27 concludes: “I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!”

Waiting on the Lord is an exercise of faith. As such, waiting on the Lord also brings forth blessings. God promises it. As Isaiah the prophet (chap. 40) says: “they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

And here we see that blessings come even during the waiting, not just after the wait is over. They come as strength is renewed and people mount up, run and walk with endurance.

Joseph teaches us this virtue of waiting. While he was in prison he didn’t stew in anger. He didn’t plot an escape through violent means. He waited on the Lord. And that waiting was a measure of his strength, not a weakness.

Between last week’s reading and tonight’s we skipped a number of verses that tell of the earlier days of Joseph’s imprisonment. Those verses tell of how Joseph first met Pharaoh’s cupbearer and how he met the baker too. They also give a description of how things went for Joseph in those first days.

The description tells us that Joseph didn’t just sit in prison idly. Instead, while he was waiting, he found ways to make himself useful. Let me read it:

“But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph’s charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed” (Genesis 39:21–23).

Notice how incredibly similar the language is to the description of Joseph serving in Potiphar’s house. Once again, God was with Joseph. And Joseph in turn was faithful. He served the master of the prison well and proved to be trustworthy.

And because of this he rose to a place of responsibility. Think about this. The fact that Joseph was able to gain the trust and respect of both the prison keeper and his fellow prisoners is really quite amazing.

And here, of course, is a lesson for us. We may be waiting for our circumstances to improve. And we may find that there’s very little we can do to change those circumstances. But that doesn’t mean we are to do nothing. There are always ways we can serve. And there will always be opportunities for the one who is trustworthy.

The one who is waiting for employment opportunities to improve, for instance, can pick up a new hobby. The one who is waiting for their body to recover from an illness or procedure can

learn a new skill. And even when our energy is low and our struggle is great, we can always pray. We can pray for ourselves, and we can pray for others.

Unfortunately, most of us don’t do very well with waiting. Part of that is because waiting is not a virtue that our world tends to applaud. We’re taught to be people of action.

But another part of it is just our own lack of peace and contentment. When our actions don't bring about the desired results, we obsess over what went wrong. And then we try to fix things by finding a better way. If the long is line, we look for a shortcut or a pass. If the traffic is heavy on one road, we quickly try another. When the wi-fi is slow, we immediately start looking for another network or another provider.

And if the other options don't work (and maybe even before we've explored those options!) we often throw a fit. Because we don't like to wait. We become angry. And scared.

Think about what happened with Peter in our Passion reading. Earlier, he had boldly told Jesus he would stand strong beside him. But when Jesus made it clear that standing strong wasn't about wielding a sword but about waiting on the Lord, Peter's fears took over. Later, when questioned about being with Jesus, Peter denied it. Three times. When the Lord caught his eye and Peter had to face his weakness, Peter went out and wept.

Faithful waiting doesn't come naturally to us. Thankfully, God overcomes our nature. God does this as we remember his promises. And he does it as we recall how he provided help to Peter, Joseph, and all those who call out to him in faith.

God's great promise is that there is life beyond our struggles – even beyond the grave. Like Joseph, we may sometimes find ourselves sitting in a prison not knowing what the immediate future holds. But we know we belong to the Lord. And that means a future where we will end up by his side... in the home he has prepared for us... in the safety and glory of his presence. We just need to wait in faith.

The source of all our hope and confidence – the foundation of our faithful waiting – is Jesus. Like Joseph, Jesus was a true son of Israel. Like Joseph, Jesus sank into the depths and was raised up to new heights. Like Joseph, Jesus worked a deliverance for the whole world – and not just from famine but from the power of sin and death. In Jesus, God reconciled the world to himself, not counting our trespasses against us.

Our lives unfold much like Joseph's. Maybe not with the same extremes, but certainly with the same roller coaster highs and lows, twists and turns. When life is at its most challenging and we are forced to wait, let us lean on our faith and trust in the Lord.

Luther, when talking about Joseph's faith, said that we, with the same confidence, should say: "I know that I have been baptized, that I have eaten the body and drunk the blood of the Son of God, that I have been absolved by divine authority, that all my sins have certainly been forgiven

me, and that victory over the devil, death and hell has been promised me. What more should I ask for?"

We therefore entrust to God all our days and all their burdens, for through faith in Jesus our sin is forgiven, and our guilt taken away. Heaven stands open for us. Like Joseph, we will have good days and bad days, triumphs and tragedies, but we know how our story will end. It will end in his presence. And in joy. Jesus has assured it.

In his holy name. Amen.

LENTEN HYMN #438 A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth

- A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,
The guilt of sinners bearing
And, laden with the sins of earth,
None else the burden sharing;
Goes patient on, grows weak and faint,
To slaughter led without complaint,
That spotless life to offer,
He bears the stripes, the wounds, the lies,
The mockery, and yet replies,
"All this I gladly suffer."**

- 2 This Lamb is Christ, the soul's great friend,
The Lamb of God, our Savior,
Whom God the Father chose to send
To gain for us His favor.
"Go forth, My Son," the Father said,
"And free My children from their dread
Of guilt and condemnation.
The wrath and stripes are hard to bear,
But by Your passion they will share
The fruit of Your salvation."
- 3 "Yes, Father, yes, most willingly
I'll bear what You command Me.
My will conforms to Your decree,
I'll do what You have asked Me."
O wondrous Love, what have You done!
The Father offers up His Son,
Desiring our salvation.
O Love, how strong You are to save!
You lay the One into the grave
Who built the earth's foundation.
- 4 Lord, when Your glory I shall see
And taste Your kingdom's pleasure,
Your blood my royal robe shall be,
My joy beyond all measure!
When I appear before Your throne,
Your righteousness shall be my crown;
With these I need not hide me.
And there, in garments richly wrought,
As Your own bride shall we be brought
To stand in joy beside You.

OFFERING

Offerings support the church's mission work – both here and through our many partners. Offerings may be placed in the box at the sanctuary entrance or sent to the church through our website or the mail.

Fellowship Cards help us welcome new people and track participation. Please fill one out and place it in the offering box following the service.

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 Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.**

- 2 I need Thy presence ev'ry passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.**

- 3 Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings;
Tears for all woes, a heart for ev'ry plea.
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.**

- 4 Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.**

POSTLUDE

Abide with Me
Setting: David Cherwien

THOSE SERVING:

Greeter: Marian Robinson
Reader: Norm Williams

Acknowledgments

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God, Who Made the Earth and Heaven Text (st. 1): Reginald Heber, 1783–1826, alt.; (sts. 2, 4): William Mercer, 1811–73, alt.; (st. 3): Richard Whately, 1787–1863, alt. Tune: Welsh, 18th cent. Text & Tune: Public domain

Jesus, I Will Ponder Now Text: Sigismund von Birken, 1626–81; tr. August Crull, 1845–1923, alt. Tune: Melchior Vulpus, c. 1570–1615 Text & Tune: Public domain

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