

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

LENTEN MIDWEEK SERVICE

April 6, 2022



PRELUDE

Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing

Setting: Robert J. Powell

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 #421

Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing

- 1 **Jesus, grant that balm and healing
In Your holy wounds I find,
Ev'ry hour that I am feeling
Pains of body and of mind.
Should some evil thought within
Tempt my treach'rous heart to sin,
Show the peril, and from sinning
Keep me from its first beginning.**
- 2 **Should some lust or sharp temptation
Fascinate my sinful mind,
Draw me to Your cross and passion,
And new courage I shall find.
Or should Satan press me hard,
Let me then be on my guard,
Saying, "Christ for me was wounded,"
That the tempter flee confounded.**
- 3 **If the world my heart entices
With the broad and easy road,
With seductive, sinful vices,
Let me weigh the awful load
You were willing to endure.
Help me flee all thoughts impure
And to master each temptation,
Calm in prayer and meditation.**

- 4 **Ev'ry wound that pains or grieves me
By Your wounds, Lord, is made whole;
When I'm faint, Your cross revives me,
Granting new life to my soul.
Yes, Your comfort renders sweet
Ev'ry bitter cup I meet;
For Your all-atoning passion
Has procured my soul's salvation.**
- 5 **O my God, my rock and tower,
Grant that in Your death I trust,
Knowing death has lost its power
Since You crushed it in the dust.
Savior, let Your agony
Ever help and comfort me;
When I die be my protection,
Light and life and resurrection.**

FIRST READING (Be seated)

Genesis 45:1-15

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.' And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

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 as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. But turning to them Jesus said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!” The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun’s light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent!”

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:

“God has a plan.” I’m sure you’ve heard that before. Maybe someone’s said it to you.

These words often get spoken in times of trouble or tragedy. I’ve heard them from families being interviewed on the news as they tell of their loss. The words are a statement of faith. And meant to be comforting.

“God has a plan.” Maybe you’ve said it yourself. On the other hand, maybe you’ve avoided saying it. After all, it can sound like a cliché. And will it really be comforting, or will it come off as trite, simplistic and perhaps even a cop-out?

As our Lenten journey with Joseph moves closer to its culmination, one theme that’s clearly emerged from his story is that God has a plan. Events happen in Joseph’s life that have great bearing on the future – and these events are controlled by God, either as things he allows or things which he directly causes, such as dreams.

God’s plans, as we see in these stories, may be completely hidden for a time. People may see, hear and experience something terrible only to discover later that God was doing his good things through it. Joseph, we recall, experienced the trauma of being taken from his family and sold into slavery at the hands of his own brothers. What happened to him was the result of pure evil. But in those very same circumstances God was at work, preparing salvation for his people and ensuring their survival.

Joseph's brothers had unknowingly been a part of God's plan. Tonight's reading from Genesis told of the reunion they never saw coming. And when it finally happened – when they heard the high-ranking Egyptian official say to them "I am Joseph" – they were dismayed, terrified and unable to speak, no doubt fearing the worst. But in one sentence Joseph not only allayed their fears but also spoke about how everything had unfolded under God's direction. He said: "Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life."

Joseph told his brothers, in effect: "you sold me... but God sent me."

When we hear that statement, we're prone to question it. We figure it must be one or the other – either Joseph's brothers acted, or God acted.

But Joseph's words teach us that it was both. Both acted. And here we see that God's plans are wonderful both in their outcome and in their mystery.

God has a plan. And tonight's readings also make clear that at the heart of God's plan is forgiveness. God's plans move forward and succeed where there is forgiveness.

Joseph's treatment of his brothers is a profound lesson on the power of forgiveness. In fact, his words and actions are what forgiveness looks like.

Joseph, we recall, was at that time one of the most powerful men in the world. And before him were the brothers who betrayed him and mistreated him, now down on their knees, guilty of great evil and deserving death. But what does Joseph do? Through tear-filled eyes he forgives them – speaking tenderly to them and comforting them with kisses. He forgives every last brother. And he tells them that God has a plan.

What if Joseph had not forgiven them? What if Joseph had done what comes much more naturally to our human nature? What if Joseph had decided that turnabout is fair play and that revenge is a dish best served cold? What if Joseph's forgiveness was in word only – so that he refused to supply them the food they needed? What if Joseph's forgiveness was conditional and he made them spend time in prison to work off their debt?

If Joseph didn't forgive his brothers – doing so in a way that was generous and merciful – God's plan would have been imperiled. The family line of Judah may have come to an end as a victim of famine. And that would mean no Messiah coming through Judah's line as prophesied.

Oh, you say, God would just find another way. Perhaps he would.

Then again, perhaps he wouldn't.

Speaking of the Messiah, the crucifixion scene we read about in today's Passion reading is not unlike the scene of Joseph and his brothers. In it, the most powerful man in the world – Jesus, the Son of God – finds himself betrayed and mistreated by his brothers. Some of those brothers shouted out for his death. Some of those brothers mocked him and beat him. Some of those brothers nailed him to a cross – causing great pain and humiliation. Some of those brothers slunk away in defeat – too scared to even be seen with him.

But Jesus submits himself to all this as a part of God's plan. And because he knows that God's plan is good and because he trusts it, he forgives his brothers. All of them. He doesn't seek revenge on those who are his enemies. He doesn't turn his back on those whose friendship has failed. Rather, he says: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what that they do."

This is what forgiveness looks like. And we see how central it is to God's plan.

That plan of God for the life and salvation of his people had been underway since long before Joseph was born. It had been going forward ever since our first parents ushered sin and its wages into the world.

According to the plan, God would send a Savior when the time was right – one who would be recognized through his lineage and yet hidden by his humility. The plan would be wonderful in what it accomplished and wondrous in its great mystery.

This plan of God would be centered in forgiveness – our forgiveness. Its tragic elements – the pain and suffering – would serve the purpose of paying the price of that forgiveness.

This part of God’s plan is the best news we can ever hear, because it means we don’t get what our sins deserve. Like Joseph’s brothers with their guilty consciences and their jaws on the floor, we don’t get what we have coming to us. Instead, our brother Jesus forgives us. He speaks to us tenderly through the proclamation of his promises. He comforts us with the cup of salvation. He comes to us in flesh and blood to serve and save us.

Flowing from this grand plan of salvation is God’s plan for you. Yes, God has a plan for your life. Your life is not a random series of events – mere actions and reactions, causes and effects which are meaningless in the end. Far from it! Your Baptism declares that God is determined to have his way with you. And his way is always good.

We who have been forgiven now understand that God’s plan also involves our forgiving of others so that reconciliation among people may take place. God’s forgiveness frees us to extend that forgiveness as we are called. And this is doubly important because refusing to forgive hinders and imperils God’s plans. When we do not forgive as we have been forgiven, we get in the way of God’s work.

God does his work in accordance with his plan for the world. He who knows and sees all will accomplish his purposes. God has a plan, and this article of our faith is not trite but truthful. It is comfort not cliché.

God’s plan means that he also has a plan for you. The plan has many aspects for sure. And you will not always understand what they are. But God will work them all out according to his promises.

And these plans will be for your good. As God once said through the prophet Jeremiah: “For I know the plans I have for you, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

God’s plan for you centers your life in the life of our Savior. Through our Savior Jesus you will be reminded of your forgiveness and empowered to forgive others. You will be renewed and strengthened in your faith so that you can face your challenges with hope.

The trials and travails of Joseph are another reminder of all this. They remind us not to worry when brothers betray us or when temptation comes calling. They teach us that when our life seems wasted or worthless God can release us from these prisons and use us for his good.

We cannot know and cannot see all that God is doing. We can’t understand every aspect of his plans. We can only trust and believe that his plans are good.

Thankfully, that is enough.

May God then bless us in this faith. And may God fill us with peace and joy as we watch his plans unfold. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

LENTEN HYMN #439 Sts. 1, 5, 8, 14, 15 O Dearest Jesus, What Law hast Thou Broken

- O dearest Jesus, what law hast Thou broken
That such sharp sentence should on Thee be spoken?
Of what great crime hast Thou to make confession,
What dark transgression?**

- 5 **The sinless Son of God must die in sadness;
The sinful child of man may live in gladness;
Man forfeited his life and is acquitted;
God is committed.**
- 8 **O mighty King, no time can dim Thy glory!
How shall I spread abroad Thy wondrous story?
How shall I find some worthy gifts to proffer?
What dare I offer?**
- 14 **But worthless is my sacrifice, I own it;
Yet, Lord, for love's sake Thou wilt not disown it;
Thou wilt accept my gift in Thy great meekness
Nor shame my weakness.**
- 15 **And when, dear Lord, before Thy throne in heaven
To me the crown of joy at last is given,
Where sweetest hymns Thy saints forever raise Thee,
I, too, shall praise Thee.**

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.

SENDING HYMN #882 O Christ, Who Art the Light and Day

- 1 O Christ, who art the light and day,
Thou drivest night and gloom away;
O Light of Light, whose Word doth show
The light of heav'n to us below.**

- 2 All-holy Lord, in humble prayer
We ask tonight Thy watchful care.
O grant us calm repose in Thee,
A quiet night, from perils free.**

- 3 Our sleep be pure from sinful stain;
Let not the tempter vantage gain
Or our unguarded flesh surprise
And make us guilty in Thine eyes.**
- 4 Asleep though wearied eyes may be,
Still keep the heart awake to Thee;
Let Thy right hand outstretched above
Guard those who serve the Lord they love.**
- 5 Behold, O God, our shield, and quell
The crafts and subtleties of hell;
Direct Thy servants in all good,
Whom Thou hast purchased with Thy blood.**
- 6 O Lord, remember us who bear
The burden of the flesh we wear;
Thou who dost e'er our souls defend,
Be with us even to the end.**
- 7 All praise to God the Father be,
All praise, eternal Son, to Thee,
Whom with the Spirit we adore
Forever and forevermore. Amen.**

POSTLUDE

O Christ, Who Art the Light and Day
Setting: John Ferguson

THOSE SERVING:

Greeter: Rich Kauzlarich
Reader: Anne Kauzlarich

Acknowledgments

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