

LENTEN MIDWEEK SERVICE
MARCH 29, 2023

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, WELCOME TO ST. PAUL'S!

EVENING PRAYER

7:00 p.m.



THE ENTRANCE RITE

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

WELCOME

THE SERVICE OF LIGHT (Stand)

LSB 243 – 247

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world,
the light no darkness can overcome.

Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening,
and the day is almost over.

Let Your light scatter the darkness
and illumine Your Church.

PHOS HILARON

Joyous light of glory:

of the immortal Father;

heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ.

**We have come to the setting of the sun,
and we look to the evening light.**

We sing to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

**You are worthy of being praised
with pure voices forever.**

O Son of God, O Giver of life:

the universe proclaims Your glory.

THANKSGIVING FOR LIGHT

Blessèd are You, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who led Your people Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Enlighten our darkness by the light of Your Christ; may His Word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for You are merciful, and You love Your whole creation and we, Your creatures, glorify You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

PSALM 141

**Let my prayer rise before You as incense,
the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.**

O Lord, I call to You; come to me quickly;
hear my voice when I cry to You.

**Let my prayer rise before You as incense,
the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.**

Set a watch before my mouth, O Lord,
and guard the door of my lips.

Let not my heart incline to any evil thing;
let me not be occupied in wickedness with evildoers.
But my eyes are turned to You, O God;
in You I take refuge.

Strip me not of my life.

**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.**

**Let my prayer rise before You as incense,
the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.**

Let us pray.

Let the incense of our repentant prayer ascend before You, O Lord, and let Your loving-kindness descend on us that, with purified minds, we may sing Your praises with the Church on earth and the whole heavenly host and may glorify You forever.

Amen.

FIRST LESSON (Be seated) 2 Chronicles 34:1–3, 29–32; 35:20–27

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and the metal images.

Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up to the house of the LORD, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites, all the people both great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. Then he made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates and Josiah went out to meet him. But he sent envoys to him, saying, “What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war. And God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing

God, who is with me, lest he destroy you.” Nevertheless, Josiah did not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to fight with him. He did not listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but came to fight in the plain of Megiddo. And the archers shot King Josiah. And the king said to his servants, “Take me away, for I am badly wounded.” So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in his second chariot and brought him to Jerusalem. And he died and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah; and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day. They made these a rule in Israel; behold, they are written in the Laments. Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his good deeds according to what is written in the Law of the LORD, and his acts, first and last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 30 (Read responsively)

I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.

O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go
down to the pit.

Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.

For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

As for me, I said in my prosperity,
“I shall never be moved.”

By your favor, O LORD,
you made my mountain stand strong;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.

To you, O LORD, I cry,
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:
“What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?
Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!
O LORD, be my helper!”

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
you have loosed my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness,
that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

GOSPEL HYMN (Stand) #554 Sts. 1, 5

O Jesus, King Most Wonderful

- 1 O Jesus, King most wonderful!
O Conqueror renowned!
O Source of peace ineffable,
In whom all joys are found:**
- 5 Oh, may our tongues forever bless,
May we love You alone
And ever in our lives express
The image of Your own!**

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 23:26-31

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?"

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:

Since this is our final midweek Lenten service, our focus tonight will be on Josiah – the last of the good kings of Judah. We've skipped over another good king – Hezekiah – but we'll circle back and examine his reign on Maundy Thursday.

When Josiah took the throne, Judah had been suffering for 57 years under two of the worst kings she ever had. The first was Manasseh, who reigned fifty-five years and brought all the false gods of Judah's past back into the kingdom. The second was his son Amon, who ruled for only two years but somehow managed to be even worse than his dad. When Amon was assassinated by his servants, Josiah his son was made king.

Those fifty-seven years of worshiping idols took its toll on Judah. A faithful remnant remained, yes. But it was weak. And so was the nation. Several generations had passed without regular celebration of festivals and teaching of Torah. The people were now accustomed to worshiping the Baals and Asheroth, and the temple was again in disrepair, as it always was following long periods of faithlessness.

Josiah was just eight years old when he began to reign. The scripture begins its account of him by saying: "He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father" (34:2). Indeed, as he grew up, he began to seek the Lord

as known and loved by David. Josiah's reign may have begun in the chaos of assassination and foreign enemies on every side, but it was now showing signs of new hope.

Still, could Josiah stave off the destruction of Judah and lead the people back into glory? After so many years of unfaithfulness, it seemed that perhaps this hope might be Judah's last.

Our reading this evening shared a little about the good start Josiah made during his reign. Not only did he begin to seek the Lord, but in the twelfth year of his reign he began to make great reforms. Among these, he purged Judah and Jerusalem of its places and instruments of false worship.

Then, at the age of twenty-six, Josiah did even more good work. Following the example of the good kings of the past, he began to repair the house of the Lord.

While the carpenters and builders were busy working on this great project, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law, the Torah of Moses. The book had obviously been neglected for a long time and Hilkiah gave the book to his secretary, Shaphan, telling him to read it to the king while making his regular report.

When King Josiah heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes in anguish and shame, for he realized how much his people had been neglecting God's will. The king was in fact so moved that he decided that the great book, more precious than all the money found in the temple, must be shared with the people. And that's what he did. The king read it before all Judah and its people, so that they could hear of the great promises and curses of the Mosaic covenant.

And so it was that this discovery resulted in a renewal of faith, as all the people, great and small, heard the words of God and repented. They turned away from their idols and gave witness to the covenant that God had made with his people.

The covenant was then renewed as Josiah kept a Passover in Jerusalem. The scripture tells us that "no Passover like it had been

kept in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet” (35:18). It was obviously quite a celebration!

Still, hanging over the reign of King Josiah was the word of the prophetess Huldah, who had been prophesying an impending disaster. This disaster, she said, would be delayed until the death of Josiah. But it would come, nonetheless.

The king was still very young, and it seemed there would be many good years ahead. But not long after that great Passover celebration, a large Egyptian army approached Judah from the south. Perhaps the king had that message of the prophetess in mind, because when Pharaoh Neco explained to Judah that he simply wanted to pass through on his way to battle someone else further north – probably newly expansionistic Babylon – Josiah didn’t believe him.

Neco even explained that God – Judah’s God – had spoken to him about Egypt’s plans and encouraged them. “God has commanded me to hurry,” he said.

He then told Josiah very directly: “Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you.”

This is a remarkable exchange. And perhaps Josiah couldn’t believe that God would speak through a foreign leader. Or perhaps he was just unsettled by having a large foreign army trapse through his territory. Whatever the case, the king couldn’t resist taking action. He determined that he was going to fight Neco and the Egyptians, even though greatly outnumbered.

Josiah may have recalled that God had overcome such odds in the past. Yet he forgot that God never blesses those who oppose his word. The word of God may have been spoken by one of the most unlikely prophets of all Scripture, but it was still spoken.

Reading through the Biblical account, we see further that Josiah went ahead with his battle plan without calling upon God to lead his forces. He came up with his own plan instead – disguising himself – just as wicked king Ahab of Israel had done years earlier.

In this Josiah tried to oppose Egypt without having to do so publicly and by taking matters into his own hands.

King Josiah may have been disguised from his enemies, but he was not disguised from God. During the fight, an arrow hit and mortally wounded him. And with this the words of the

unlikely prophet Neco were fulfilled as King Josiah was destroyed in the valley of Megiddo. The last hope of Judah had fallen in an unnecessary war – one against a king acting by God's command.

Upon Josiah's death, his son became king in his place. That reign lasted only three months.

After this, the Egyptians installed a puppet king in Judah. But then Babylon soon invaded and advanced – setting up its own puppet kings. One thing led to another and soon Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. The chosen people were then exiled. And now the prophecies of Huldah, along with her contemporaries Isaiah and Jeremiah, were fulfilled.

The kingdom of Judah would never be the same after Josiah's death. The old days were gone, and now foreigners would have the upper hand in the land of David. The death of Josiah was a time of weeping and lamentation – weeping for a good king whose death was untimely; weeping for a lost nation whose future was a shadow of her past.

King Josiah was a good king—truly a great king in many ways. But his righteous repentance and sacrifices were unable to stave off the destruction of the kingdom. And in the end, what good is a king if he can only give his people peace until his death? What hope is there when all that a man works for gets destroyed in the next generation?

One generation follows another. And the pattern continues. That's the message we get from the Books of Chronicles.

And yet the Books end with one last word of hope. It seemed a very small hope. But it was hope, nonetheless.

So it was that Jesus, another Son of Josiah, and another Son of David, came to his own wicked and sinful generation many years later. Jesus brought hope by proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. This message was accompanied by a new and fresh reading of God's Holy Word – proclaimed in the temple, the synagogues, and in the countryside.

There was much opposition to this preaching. "What good can come from Nazareth?" some said. Others found fault with his work on the Sabbath or his claim to forgive sins. And this opposition eventually led to threats and the prospect of great suffering.

But Jesus did not run away. He had often taught that the Son of Man must suffer and die and be raised again. He embraced the threats that were made against him.

The Son of David then entered Jerusalem. And his entrance was like a parade befitting a new king. But Jesus wasn't going for a coronation. Rather, he would be the victim of an assassination.

Still, Jesus would not turn away from this hard future. The Son of Josiah would not disguise himself or hide from the enemy. He taught openly in the temple and confronted false teachers wherever they opposed God's Word.

It was his enemies who sought the cover of darkness to hide their evil deeds. Out of fear of the crowds, the chief priests took Jesus into custody in the dead of night. By morning, the Son of God was stripped of his clothes and hung bare under a sign reading: "This is the King of the Judeans."

The crowds had called for blood. And the faithful women wept and lamented. They lamented before his death, as we heard in our Gospel reading this evening. And they lamented after his death, as seen in their plans to anoint his body in the tomb.

And this lamenting reflected their love for him. But it also reflected their loss of a great hope – the hope that he was the one who would redeem Israel.

The last hope of Israel died on a cross – not shot by archers but knowingly nailed to the tree. The message read out on the sign proclaimed that this is what happens to kings of the Judeans.

And most of the world rejoiced at the death of this innocent man. In this, Jesus' own prediction had come true. Wicked men had opposed God's Word and violent men had taken the kingdom by force (Matthew 11:12).

But this was not the end of the story. For this Son of David turned mourning into joy.

What Jesus knew, and that the disciples and the women could not believe, was that the path to an eternal kingdom went through the cross. Only by suffering death could death be overcome.

And that's what happened. Jesus' death paid the price of our sins. And with our sins forgiven, we can follow our Savior into life, where weeping is no more, and sorrow is turned to dancing.

The reign of this Son of David, Jesus, was incredibly short by earthly standards. He was marked for death and already sentenced when he was crowned. But there would be no successor, because Jesus is a king – the only king – who succeeds himself at death.

We therefore no longer mourn King Josiah and the days that his death ushered in. Nor do we mourn the destruction of the temple or Jerusalem. Those we do not need!

Nor do we mourn Jesus. For our King lives eternally. And his kingdom lives as well.

In him, in our resurrected Lord, we have all the hope we will ever need. In times when fear grips our hearts, we need only to look to the cross. There we see the power of God and his King, our Lord and Savior Jesus.

When we turn to the cross, our sorrow is turned to joy. As our eternal King Jesus once said: "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

Jesus' resurrection turns our sorrow into joy. May God sustain us in this joy always. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY #436 (Stand) 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.**

OFFERING (Be seated)

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.

THE PRAYERS (Kneel)

LSB 249

BENEDICAMUS (Stand)

LSB 252

BENEDICTION

LSB 252

SENDING HYMN #884

Lord, Support Us All Day Long

- 1 Lord, support us all day long,
Guide and strengthen.
Evening comes, the world is hushed,
Shadows lengthen,
Work is done, life's fevered pace
Now has ended;
Christ, to You, our final rest
Is commended.**
- 2 Be our light in darkness, Lord,
Our defender;
In Your presence perils all
Must surrender.
Drive all dark satanic snares
From each dwelling;
Then, at peace, our hearts Your praise
Will be telling.**
- 3 With Your presence, Lord, draw near
Those who labor
Through the nighttime on behalf
Of their neighbor.
Grant them courage for each fear,
Faithful caring:
Your compassion and Your love
Truly sharing.**

**4 Gracious Lord, we give You thanks,
Praise and bless You,
As the giver of all good
We confess You.
This past day we now commit
To Your keeping
And entrust to You the hours
Of our sleeping.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

THOSE SERVING:

Greeter: Steve Berg
Reader: Dede Dixon

Acknowledgments

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Created by Lutheran Service Builder © 2022 Concordia Publishing House.

O Jesus, King Most Wonderful Text: attr. Bernard of Clairvaux, 1091–1153; tr. Edward Caswall, 1814–78, alt. Tune: John B. Dykes, 1823–76 Text & Tune: Public domain

Go to Dark Gethsemane Text: James Montgomery, 1771–1854 Tune: Richard Redhead, 1820–1901 Text & Tune: Public domain

Lord, Support Us All Day Long Text: Stephen P. Starke, 1955 Text: © 1998 Stephen P. Starke, admin. Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110005326 Tune: Joseph D. Jones, 1827–70, alt. Tune: Public domain