

LENTEN MIDWEEK SERVICE
MARCH 1, 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 14:1-7: 16:1-13

Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David. And Asa his son reigned in his place. In his days the land had rest for ten years. And Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. He took away the foreign altars and the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the Asherim and commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment. He also took out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the incense altars. And the kingdom had rest under him. He built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest. He had no war in those years, for the LORD gave him peace. And he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God. We have sought him, and he has given us peace on every side." So they built and prospered.

In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might permit no one to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the LORD and the king's house and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, "There is a covenant between me and you, as there was between my father and your father. Behold, I am sending to you silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me." And Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and they conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. And when Baasha heard of it, he stopped building Ramah and let his work cease. Then King Asa took all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Baasha had been building, and with them he built Geba and Mizpah.

At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, "Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you. Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars." Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in the stocks in prison, for he was in a rage with him because of this. And Asa inflicted cruelties upon some of the people at the same time.

The acts of Asa, from first to last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers, dying in the forty-first year of his reign.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 33:10-22 (Read responsively)

The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.

The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
the plans of his heart to all generations.

Blessèd is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

The LORD looks down from heaven;
he sees all the children of man;
from where he sits enthroned he looks out
on all the inhabitants of the earth,
he who fashions the hearts of them all
and observes all their deeds.

The king is not saved by his great army;

a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
The war horse is a false hope for salvation,
and by its great might it cannot rescue.

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
that he may deliver their soul from death
and keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
For our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.
Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

GOSPEL HYMN (Stand) #554 Sts. 1, 2

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:**
- 2 When once You visit darkened hearts,
Then truth begins to shine,
Then earthly vanity departs,
Then kindles love divine.**

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 26:14–16; 27:3–6

Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to

us? See to it yourself.” And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.”

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:

Tonight we continue our consideration of the good kings of Judah as described for us in the Books of Chronicles. Last week we considered King David – undoubtedly the greatest of these kings. Now we skip a few kings, including Solomon, and continue with David’s great-great-grandson Asa.

We read in the Book of Second Chronicles that “Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God” (14:2). And this was in stark contrast to the immediate kings who came before him.

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon and grandfather of Asa, “did evil,” according to the Chronicler, “for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord” (12:14). During Rehoboam’s reign there was a civil war, and David’s great kingdom was divided into Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Thereafter, there was constant tension between the two kingdoms, and sometimes even war.

Abijah, Rehoboam’s son and Asa’s father, also “walked in all the sins that his father did . . . and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God” (1 Ki 15:3). During his reign Egypt came up against Judah. Because Judah and its capital Jerusalem retained strength from the days of Kings David and Solomon, they were able to beat back the attack. But there was now no rest or peace in the land.

King Asa therefore ascended to the throne in a difficult time. But as we heard, Asa “did what was good and right in the eyes of the

LORD his God. He took away the foreign altars and the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the Asherim (which were representations of Asherah, an important Canaanite goddess), and commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment” (14:2).

The Chronicler tells us that “the land had rest for ten years” (14:1). Asa understood the reason for this. He said: “We have sought [the Lord], and he has given us peace on every side” (14:7). God had seen the faithfulness of his people and their king. Ten years of peace, after all their struggles, was a great gift and reward.

But then an army of a million Ethiopians and Libyans came up to Judah. This was twice the size of the army of Judah. Still, King Asa cried to the Lord, saying: “We rely on you.” This faith was again rewarded, and Asa and the Judeans were given a great victory (14:11).

After this, Judah enjoyed many more years of peace. In his thirty-five years of ruling, however, Asa faced a new challenge. Israel, the Northern Kingdom – recently docile but never friendly to Judah—was militarizing the border. Its king, Baasha, started to build a fortress at Ramah – a city just five miles north of Jerusalem. The fortress was meant to restrict travel and trade into Judah.

Interestingly, one type of travel it would restrict was immigration. The previous chapter (v. 9) tells how many in Israel had gone to Judah because they saw how God blessed the king and people there.

As for the trade, unrestricted access through this point would be a significant loss to Judah. Much of its wealth came from its trade with the regions of the north, who travelled upon this route. Building the fortress was a serious act of war, and Asa would not stand for it.

After all those years of faithfulness, we would expect that Asa would turn to the Lord for help in the crisis. Hadn't the Lord earlier decimated a million-man army that had arisen against him?

Asa did go to the temple of the Lord. But not to pray. Rather, Asa raided God's house for its wealth. Asa "took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord," (16:2) looting the great temple built by Solomon and planned by David.

Asa did this in order to bribe Ben-hadad of Syria. Syria was neutral in the ongoing cold war between Judah and Israel. But Asa now gave lavishly to them so that they would break their covenant with the Northern Kingdom. He hired them as foreign mercenaries, to attack from the north and force Israel to cease building its fortress on the Judean border.

King Asa had found a solution to his immediate problem. And gotten the results he wanted. Syria's attack forced Israel to abandon its work in Ramah in order to deal with the new threat.

Nonetheless, all was not well in Judah. Because Asa had turned the temple treasury into blood money.

This did not sit well with the Lord. Having his house plundered so that his people could buy protection from a pagan king was not acceptable. And so the Lord sent Hanani the seer to call the king to repentance.

Hanani told the king that God would have given him victory over Israel, and Syria too, if only the king had inquired. Syria may have been neutral at the time, but they had a long history with Judah. "The army of the king of Syria has escaped you," said Hanani. Indeed, that army would bring future troubles upon Judea, as the Chronicler reports in upcoming chapters (18, 22).

But rather than repenting after hearing these words of the prophet, Asa threw Hanani into prison. This was further evidence that good King Asa had grown hostile to God in his latter days. His new lack of faith even caused him to inflict cruelties on his people.

Within a few years, Asa's days were numbered. He began to suffer from a debilitating disease of his feet. "Yet even in his disease," says the scripture, "he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from physicians" (16:12). Sadly, Asa had given up the practice of seeking God for his help. He died of that disease and was buried with his fathers.

Asa's reign, overall, was good and prosperous. It was not one of those bad times in the history of Judah. And yet King Asa couldn't provide a lasting peace. And his faithlessness toward the end set the stage for future troubles.

Success, peace and rest had somehow corrupted the heart of King Asa. These became stumbling blocks that led him to trust in himself and his own resources in times of trouble rather than the help and aid of God.

And this can happen with us too. Wealth, prosperity and opportunity can lead us to think we no longer need God. When we get good at finding our own solutions, we sometimes feel that turning to God is a waste.

Likewise, age and experience can erode our faith as well. We get tired of faith's demands. We look back upon our lives and wonder if God was really there in our times of struggle and survival or whether we just found a way on our own. We, too, revise our histories – even our survival against million-man armies.

The prophet Hanani had words of law and judgment to deliver to King Asa. Those were needed, as they are to us.

But the prophet also spoke words which reflected God's goodness and mercy. As he explained: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him" (16:9). Hanani reminds us that the Lord hears the prayers of those who keep faith.

God will in fact stop at nothing to provide rest and peace for his people. He will provide these in the measure we need, and according to his great wisdom. He will do this as he works through

the efforts of mostly good kings, and he will do this according to the faithfulness of his people.

The actions of men have consequences, both good and bad. Today's reading should remind us that we are blessed by those actions which are done in accordance with God's laws.

But for complete rest and peace, a greater king is needed.

We need a king who can lead us into paths of righteousness. And we need a king who is completely good, not just mostly.

A king of this kind was once promised to David. This king would be David's son, to be known also as the Prince of Peace. The reign of this king would last forever.

This king is Jesus.

Jesus came into the world with proclamations of peace being sung by angels. And Jesus taught that peacemakers are blessed.

After a time of peace-filled ministry, Jesus came into the royal city riding peacefully on a donkey. And at that time he accepted the praises of his people who acclaimed him Son of David and King of Israel.

Jesus then went into the temple, just as his relative King Asa had done many years before. But unlike Asa, Jesus didn't come for the money. He didn't want or need it. Instead, he upset the tables of the merchants and poured out the coins of the moneychangers. He upset the priests and elders too, who relied on that money to maintain their place. Jesus showed that he had come to cleanse the temple of all corrupting influence which turns the house of God into a robbers' den.

Like Asa, this king also sat at the treasury for a time. But not to find donations from wealthy men, as so many people do. Instead, he focused on a poor widow – one without power or pretense – who gave more than the wealthiest tither, because she gave her life. How differently this King viewed the treasures of the temple

than his father Asa. He could see past its treasures to its true purpose—which is forgiveness and peace with God.

The guardians of the temple, however, were blinded to this. And when the opportunity arose, they used part of the treasure – thirty pieces of silver to be exact – in order to rid themselves of the one who was sent to be their new king. That amount was surely far less than Asa had taken, but it bought a temporary victory for them just the same.

The payment was given to Judas, to break his covenant with the Lord and hand him over to the pagan governor, Pontius Pilate. History was repeating itself; did you notice?

When Judas saw what horror was wrought by his betrayal, he at least tried to return the money. But it couldn't be done.

However, God's purposes were not thwarted. The Son of David had come among his people, and he would be the King of Salem, in Jeru-Salem, the city of peace.

From the temple treasury came blood money, yes. But this blood money ended up buying redemption – leading the King of the Judeans to be hanged on a cross.

Not that it was the money which did it. All the money in the world couldn't buy the price of redemption needed for sin. That's because the peace we need isn't just with a hostile neighbor, it's with God – whom we've constantly put aside in our days of trouble, and in our days of success too.

When we realize that the peace given by the world is never enough, we can then appreciate what King Jesus has come to give. Jesus has given us the peace which comes from receiving victory over sin and death.

This is not a peace which lasts for ten years or thirty-five years or any number of years. It is an eternal peace – a perfect Sabbath rest – which God has prepared for those who love him.

This is a peace we can rely on always. And it doesn't come from any treaty or covenant of man. It comes from Jesus, our good and perfect King.

May we then put our trust in this king always. For all our days. And may we be grateful for the perfect peace he gives.

In the name of Jesus, amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY #432 (Stand) In Silent Pain the Eternal Son

- 1 In silent pain the_ eternal Son
Hangs derelict and still;
In darkened day His work is done,
Fulfilled, His Father's will.
Uplifted for the world to see
He hangs in strangest victory,
For in His body on the tree
He carries all our ill.**

- 2 He died that we might die to sin
And live for righteousness;
The earth is stained to make us clean
And bring us into peace.
For peace He came and met its cost;
He gave Himself to save the lost;
He loved us to the uttermost
And paid for our release.**

- 3 For strife He came to bring a sword,
The truth to end all lies;
To rule in us, our patient Lord,
Until all evil dies:
For in His hand He holds the stars,
His voice shall speak to end our wars,
And those who love Him see His scars
And look into His eyes.**

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 #575 *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*

- 1 My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
No merit of my own I claim
But wholly lean on Jesus' name. Refrain**

Refrain

**On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.**

- 2 When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In ev'ry high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil. Refrain**

- 3 His oath, His covenant and blood
Support me in the raging flood;
When ev'ry earthly prop gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay. Refrain**

- 4 When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found,
Clothed in His righteousness alone,
Redeemed to stand before His throne! Refrain**

DISMISSAL

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

POSTLUDE

THOSE SERVING:

Greeter: Jim Easterly
Reader: Melissa Hecht

Acknowledgments

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