

LENTEN MIDWEEK SERVICE  
MARCH 8, 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 17:1–6; 18:1–3; 19:1–7

Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place and strengthened himself against Israel. He placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim that Asa his father had captured. The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel. Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand. And all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor. His heart was courageous in the ways of the LORD. And furthermore, he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.

Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor, and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab. After some years he went down to Ahab in Samaria. And Ahab killed an abundance of sheep and oxen for him and for the people who were with him, and induced him to go up against Ramoth-gilead. Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, “Will you go with me to Ramoth-gilead?” He answered him, “I am as you are, my people as your people. We will be with you in the war.”

Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem. But Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD. Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Asherahs out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God.”

Jehoshaphat lived at Jerusalem. And he went out again among the people, from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers. He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city

by city, and said to the judges, “Consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the LORD. He is with you in giving judgment. Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*PSALM 45 (Read responsively)*

My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;

I address my verses to the king;

my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

You are the most handsome of the sons of men;

grace is poured upon your lips;

therefore God has blessed you forever.

Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one,

in your splendor and majesty!

In your majesty ride out victoriously

for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness;

let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!

Your arrows are sharp

in the heart of the king’s enemies;

the peoples fall under you.

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.

The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;

you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

Therefore God, your God, has anointed you

with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;

your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.

From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;

daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor;

at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear:

forget your people and your father’s house,

and the king will desire your beauty.  
Since he is your lord, bow to him.  
The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts,  
the richest of the people.

All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes  
interwoven with gold.

In many-colored robes she is led to the king,  
with her virgin companions following behind her.  
With joy and gladness they are led along  
as they enter the palace of the king.

In place of your fathers shall be your sons;  
you will make them princes in all the earth.  
I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations;  
therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.

*GOSPEL HYMN (Stand) #554 Sts. 1, 3*

*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:**

**3 O Jesus, light of all below,  
The fount of life and fire,  
Surpassing all the joys we know,  
All that we can desire:**

*GOSPEL LESSON*

Matthew 7:24-27

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the

sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

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:

The phrase “politics makes strange bedfellows” expresses the idea that people with differing views and character often come together to achieve political goals. In politics, alliances need to be made in order to get things done. And sometimes these alliances are ones that would otherwise seem unlikely.

This doesn’t just happen in politics either. It happens in business as well, where alliances get formed to achieve common goals.

Truth be told, alliances take place in every arena of life. And this is fine. Alliances are often a very good thing.

But not always. Because alliances always involve compromise, and some compromises shouldn’t be made.

In tonight’s service we are considering King Jehoshaphat of Judah. Jehoshaphat is the son of Asa, whom we covered last week.

Jehoshaphat is considered to be a good king. Our reading this evening informed us that he “walked in the earlier ways of his father David” and “sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel.”

Jehoshaphat also “had great riches and honor. His heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord.”

Recall that at the end of his father’s reign, Judah was threatened by Israel, the Kingdom to the north. Israel was once united with Judah under King David, but the two were now separate nations. King Asa had dealt with this threat poorly by paying for outside

help. He took the Temple's treasure and hired Syria to attack Israel.

And because of this, the beginning of Jehoshaphat's reign was marked by tension. Judah may have gotten temporary relief through Asa's ploy, but the new king still needed to fortify the border and pay extra attention to the movements of the neighboring nations.

Thankfully, Judah was not drawn in to war at this time. The surrounding kingdoms feared Judah's strength, and some actually paid them tribute.

Still, Jehoshaphat was uneasy. And in his unease, he thought of an idea. There was a new king in Israel, and this presented Jehoshaphat with an opportunity. What's better than making war? Making love! Make love not war, right? Jehoshaphat did this through a marriage alliance. He gave his son, Jehoram, in marriage to Athaliah, the new king's daughter.

The idea of growing or protecting a kingdom through marriage is found throughout history's pages. A marriage alliance committed two nations to cooperate – at least in theory. In Jehoshaphat's mind, the King of Israel would be less likely to attack Judah because his daughter was married to Judah's king. That's the way it was supposed to work.

Except that these two kings were strange bedfellows. Yes, they were both kings of God's people. They spoke a common language and had much in common culturally. However, much separated them too.

The new King of Israel was named Ahab. And Ahab was a mess. He was not a good king by any measure – least of all in his devotion to the Lord God.

What's more, his wife Jezebel was possibly even worse. Jezebel's reputation was so bad that the Book of Revelation uses her name centuries later to describe a woman who was causing trouble in the church (Rev. 2:20).

We don't hear much about Ahab and Jezebel in the Books of Chronicles. Today's reading is about the only mention they receive in these books. But the Book of First Kings records a number of instances of their cruel and faithless deeds. We see that they were constantly trying to kill the great prophet, Elijah. They falsely accused their neighbor Naboth and killed him so they could take his family vineyard. They worshiped idols and did all manner of evil.

And now, by arranging a marriage alliance, Jehoshaphat and Ahab were in bed together—so to speak.

The trouble began when Jehoshaphat went to visit Ahab and Jezebel in their capital city of Samaria. At that time Ahab "killed an abundance of sheep and oxen for him and for the people who were with him." In other words King Ahab threw a great banquet for Jehoshaphat, rolling out the red carpet.

But as we might expect, this show of praise and generosity came with an attachment. An offer was made to Jehoshaphat – one that involved compromise.

King Ahab wanted to enlist Judah to join him in his fight with Israel's neighbor to the North, Syria. "Will you go with me to Ramoth-gilead?" he asked.

Jehoshaphat – no doubt enjoying Ahab's finest wine and choicest meats and finding himself in the company of people now tied to him through marriage – said in reply: "I am as you are; my people as your people. We will be with you in the war." Judah and Israel had thus been joined as one. They were bedfellows.

The great irony is that Judah will now go to fight Ben-hadad of Syria. Yes, this is the very same Ben-hadad that Asa, Jehoshaphat's father, had paid to attack Israel in the first place! So now Judah is going to fight against the mercenaries that they themselves had hired.

How times had changed! Jehoshaphat thought he was making peace. But instead he got dragged into war. That's what happens when you make alliances with men like King Ahab.

And that was only the beginning. Ahab's real plan was to get Jehoshaphat killed. In a section of the text that we did not read this evening, we hear Ahab calculating that the Syrian king would try to kill him and thus end the war quickly. Ahab therefore disguised himself, as an ordinary soldier and told Jehoshaphat, "You wear your robes," so that he would look like the king. With allies like these, who needs enemies?

In the end, the plot didn't work. Ahab was killed and his blood ended up being mixed with water from a public pool. Dogs licked it up and prostitutes washed themselves in it (1 Ki 22:38).

Jehoshaphat, on the other hand, would repent and be one of the great kings of Judah. But the contamination that he caused carried some costs. His poor alliance, enacted by a poor marriage, led to troubles for Judah down the road.

Jehoshaphat had led his people into a compromised future. When he died and his son Jehoram became king, the stage was set for great difficulty. Jehoram's wife, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, not only kept her idolatrous faith and wicked ways but convinced her husband to follow them too. The Scriptures tell us that Jehoram "walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" (21:6). Judah would suffer terribly under this next reign.

Overall, Jehoshaphat was one of the good kings of Judah. He did much that was right and healthy. But he was seduced by the allure of a marriage alliance with Israel. And that wrong choice brought consequences.

This adulteration of the house of David could in fact have destroyed it. God does not tolerate such things. "Yet the Lord was not willing to destroy the house of David," says the scripture,

“because of the covenant that he had made with David.” God “had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever” (21:7).

Many years later, St. Paul would say of this God: “If we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim 2:13). God remains true to his people, even when those people have been beguiled into wickedness and idolatry.

Jehoshaphat was a good king of Judah. But we need a King who is even better. We need a King who will not be lured away—whose commitment to his people is stronger than his desire for alliances.

We need the Son of Jehoshaphat that would come many years later – Jesus, of Nazareth. This is the son who was uncompromising in his love for us. This is the son who refused to bow down and worship the devil to gain the kingdoms of the world. This is the son who refused to bend to the Pharisees’ demands that he follow their traditions, who was not swayed by outward

appearances or easy gain. This is the son who would rather go alone to the cross than abandon his mission of salvation.

We need this Son of David because he will remain faithful to his faithless bride. And this is essential because we, too, have gone after other gods and made unholy alliances. Our track record is no better than Jehoshaphat’s. And perhaps worse.

Like Israel, we would suffer the consequences of our sin if God had not intervened.

But God has intervened. He sent his Son Jesus to pay sin’s price. By Jesus’ death on the cross, our sin has been taken away. As Isaiah put it: “By his stripes we are healed.”

This Son joins himself to us in a holy alliance – a holy marriage, as the scriptures say. As people of the church we are joined to Christ the Bridegroom who loves us perfectly and cares for us to the end. St. Paul tells us in Ephesians that Christ “loved the church

and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-30).

In this holy marriage, the Son of God not only stands by us when we are faithless, but also works in our hearts to bring us back. The prophet Hosea, whom God sent to tell his faithless people that they had broken their marriage to him by whoring after other gods, also records God as saying: “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of judgment a door of hope” (2:14).

The church and her husband, the Lord Jesus, are certainly strange bedfellows. We, the people of the church, are by nature sinful and unclean. We look longingly at other gods – fascinated by what they offer and easily seduced by their pleasures. We look for our own solutions when troubled and make unholy alliances when the offer sounds good. Yet Jesus, who has every right to throw us out, loves us with an everlasting love. His commitment is eternal.

Making our way in the world, we might think that it’s all about the art of compromise. And we might convince ourselves that even some ungodly compromises are necessary at times.

But our life in Christ is not founded on compromise. Rather, it is founded on Jesus Christ’s marriage alliance with us. In this alliance he calls us to himself, purifies us, and brings us into his home. We are his unworthy bride. He is our faithful Husband who loves and cherishes us.

God will provide for his beloved. His promises are true.

Therefore, let us put our uncompromising trust in him. In the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

- 1    **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** (*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 #883** *All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night*

- 1 All praise to Thee, my God, this night  
For all the blessings of the light.  
Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,  
Beneath Thine own almighty wings.**
  
- 2 Forgive me, Lord, for Thy dear Son,  
The ill that I this day have done,  
That with the world, myself, and Thee,  
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.**
  
- 3 Teach me to live that I may dread  
The grave as little as my bed.  
Teach me to die that so I may  
Rise glorious at the awe-full day.**

- 4 Oh, may my soul in Thee repose,  
And may sweet sleep mine eyelids close,  
Sleep that shall me more vig'rous make  
To serve my God when I awake!
- 5 When in the night I sleepless lie,  
My soul with heav'nly thoughts supply;  
Let no ill dreams disturb my rest,  
No pow'rs of darkness me molest.
- 6 Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host:  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

*DISMISSAL*

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

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THOSE SERVING:

Greeter: Charles Fisher

Reader : Charles Fisher

Acknowledgments

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