

LENTEN MIDWEEK SERVICE
MARCH 15, 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 24:1–4, 17–25

Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. Jehoiada got for him two wives, and he had sons and daughters.

After this Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD.

Now after the death of Jehoiada the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king. Then the king listened to them. And they abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs. Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the LORD. These testified against them, but they would not pay attention.

Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God, 'Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.'" But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him, but killed his son. And when he was dying, he said, "May the LORD see and avenge!"

At the end of the year the army of the Syrians came up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus. Though the army of the Syrians had

come with few men, the LORD delivered into their hand a very great army, because Judah had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.

When they had departed from him, leaving him severely wounded, his servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest, and killed him on his bed. So he died, and they buried him in the city of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 122 (Read responsively)

I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD!”
Our feet have been standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem!
Jerusalem—built as a city
that is bound firmly together,
to which the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.
There thrones for judgment were set,
the thrones of the house of David.
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
“May they be secure who love you!
Peace be within your walls
and security within your towers!”
For my brothers and companions’ sake
I will say, “Peace be within you!”
For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek your good.

- 1 **O Jesus, King most wonderful!
O Conqueror renowned!
O Source of peace ineffable,
In whom all joys are found:**

- 4 **May ev'ry heart confess Your name,
Forever You adore,
And, seeking You, itself inflame
To seek You more and more!**

GOSPEL LESSON

John 2:13-22

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

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 this year's Lenten journey of examining the mostly-good kings of Judah, we arrive tonight at King Joash. Joash was the great grandson of the king we considered last week – King Jehoshaphat. As you may recall, Jehoshaphat did many good things during his reign – except at one point he also made an unwise marriage alliance with King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. The alliance with this king and queen to the north was unwise because of how unfaithful the two were to the Lord and his teachings.

Jehoshaphat had his son Jehoram marry Ahab and Jezebel's daughter Athaliah. Sure enough, the marriage soon brought trouble. Some of that trouble was described last week – including the joint war effort that turned a former ally into a foe. But far greater troubles commenced when Jehoshaphat died and Jehoram became king. At that time things really got ugly.

One of the first things the new king did was to kill all six of his brothers. He did this to ensure he had no rivals. And then, not long after that, he invited the people to start worshipping other gods like his wife and her family did. Jehoram also managed to anger some of Judah's minority tribes and cause them to revolt.

Thankfully, Jehoram's reign was only eight years. The scriptures describe how he died an agonizing death and (quote) "departed with no one's regret" (21:20).

After this, his youngest son Ahaziah reigned, but just for a year. And his reign was no better than his father's. Like his father he also died an inglorious death – fittingly in the kingdom of Israel, where his mother Athaliah was from.

The scripture then says that this very same Athaliah "arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah" (22:10). She wanted control for herself. Athaliah was as wicked as her mother Jezebel, and as ambitious and bloodthirsty too.

However, one of Ahaziah's sons escaped her genocidal efforts. Little infant Joash was secreted away by his aunt Jehoshabeath and uncle Jehoiada, who was a priest.

For the next six years evil Queen Athaliah ruled Judah. But in the seventh year Jehoiada the priest "took courage" and entered into a covenant with certain commanders in the land. Together they plotted about how to get rid of Athaliah and install young Joash on the throne. They went and spoke to the Levites and the heads of the father's houses. And then they spoke to the young boy himself. When everything was ready, they executed their plan... and it worked. Athaliah was removed from the throne and put to death.

In introducing the new king's reign, the scripture says: "Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest" (24:2). Joash was a good king, yes. But notice the qualification included in that introduction. The king did what was right... all the days of the priest. The priest was very old by this time. The phrase hints at difficulty to come.

While Jehoiada was alive, everything went well. Joash commenced a major renovation and cleaning of the temple. He restored it to its rightful purpose and offered burnt offerings to the Lord again. It took a long time, but Joash was zealous for the project and made sure that it was completed.

Throughout the earlier years of unfaithful leadership by the royal family the house of God had been plundered, desecrated, and ignored. And this was no small matter. The books of the Chronicles show clearly that the state of the Temple is representative of the spiritual state of Judah. The Temple's disrepair was a sign of the nation's spiritual poverty, brought about by the actions of its king.

Jehoida the priest eventually died – at age 130. And that's when things started to go wrong. His death created a void. Men now came to the king seeking new influence and opportunity. The

scripture records how they flattered him with tribute. And with their flattery they suggested that Joash undo all those reforms which he and Jehoiada had made.

In his weakness, Joash listened to them. He abandoned the house of the Lord and re-installed the Asherim and the idols. The Lord's Temple, which Joash and Jehoiada had spent so much time renovating, cleaning, and restoring, was forsaken for the worship of idols.

Joash, we see, was led by princes rather than principles. As a result, the wrath of God fell on Judah. The Chronicler later reveals that this wrath led to Judah's decline in prosperity.

Still, God sent the king prophets too. God always does this when his people are unfaithful.

However, Joash paid no attention to them. He rejected the prophets. God's appeal was spurned.

During this time, the Spirit of God came to Jehoiada's son. Like his father, Zechariah was a priest. He and King Joash were cousins but really more like brothers, since Joash had basically been adopted by his father. If anyone could get through to the king, surely it would be Zechariah.

The scriptures tell us that "the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah" and he prophesied to the people, asking, "Why do you break the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper?" (24:20). Zechariah had no doubt gone to the King first. But then he appealed directly to the people.

When Joash the king heard this, he conspired with the princes against Zechariah. And on a day when this prophet and priest stood in the court of the very temple which Joash had restored, they stoned him to death.

As he was dying, Zechariah cried out, "May the Lord see and avenge!" These words recall the requirement God made for

murder in Genesis chapter nine (vs. 5 and 6). They also recall how the blood of Abel cried out to the Lord when he was killed by his brother Cain, as recorded in Genesis four (v. 10).

Ironically, the temple had been restored so that sacrifices could be made in its courts. Blood was to be shed. But not by murder. The recently cleansed temple was defiled by Zechariah's wonton contempt of God's Word.

Joash had earlier taken great pride in the temple of his people. And perhaps in some ways he still did. But that pride was in vain when he rejected the Word of God and the Spirit who dwelt there.

And here we should point out that beautiful temples divorced from steadfast faith are simply beautiful buildings and nothing more. There were plenty of these beautiful buildings in Ahab's time – the great pyramids of Egypt and the Ziggurats of Babylon to name two. And there are plenty of them in our time as well. But beautiful and impressive architecture only accomplishes so much. God wants more for his people.

Here we should point out, too, that the great temple of Solomon, which Joash spent so much money and time restoring, would eventually be destroyed. Many years later, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon would overrun Jerusalem and raze the temple.

And even when the temple was rebuilt – first during the time of Ezra, and then later by King Herod at the time of Jesus – it was destroyed again. This time by the Romans.

Kings build temples and other kings destroy them. And even those who build or cleanse can be led astray. They can turn away from the God whose presence dwells there. They can turn away from the Word of the Lord and from the building's true purpose.

A focus on the building is not the same as a focus on God. The building is to give God honor and glory – not through ooh's and ah's but through the worship of his holy name.

Joash did lots of good things. But overall, he didn't get it. God's people needed a better king.

We do too. We and all people need a King who will restore God's true temple and never let it fall into disrepair. We need a Messiah – a King who will bring salvation. And most importantly, we need one who can save us from our sins.

Thankfully, we have that king. He is Jesus Christ – the Son of Joash, the Son of David, and the Son of all Israel's Kings, good and bad.

Jesus was taken to the temple as an infant. But then his life was threatened, by King Herod the builder, and he was taken to safety by his father Joseph. As a young man, Jesus was always about his Father's business and at home in his Father's house. In fact, zeal for his Father's house consumed him. This Son of Joash would cleanse the temple by overturning moneychangers'

tables and setting animals free. He would restore the temple to its proper use as a house of prayer and a place to meet God in his gracious presence, so that God's forgiveness could be known and received.

At the same time, King Jesus was much more than just a restorer of the Temple. His body was – and is – the temple. John the Baptist witnessed the Holy Spirit descend and remain on him. And just as the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle and Solomon's temple, and just as the Holy Spirit clothed Zechariah the priest, so also the Holy Spirit dwelled in Jesus' body, making it his temple.

John helped prepare Judah to receive this good news – just as the prophets before him had done. But John was rejected – just like many of those same prophets were. The rejection of prophets happened in Joash's day, and it happened in Jesus' day. Sadly, it also happens in ours.

Jesus often spoke to this tendency of leaders to reject God's true prophets. Once he even did it by pointing to the days of Joash. He

said to those who were rejecting him: “Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. You are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation” (Lk 11:47–51).

King Joash conspired to kill the priest Zechariah. And the chief priests conspired to send Jesus – the Son of Joash – to death.

But when Jesus was sent to death, he became the mediator of a new covenant. His sprinkled blood – as the writer of Hebrews tells us – “speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (12:24). And for that matter – better than the blood of Zechariah too.

It’s better because Jesus did not cry out from the cross for vengeance. Rather, he said: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). The blood of Jesus speaks forgiveness and peace to those who have transgressed. His blood washes away the stain of sin and is true drink to life eternal.

Our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, bore the temple in his body. And though his body was destroyed, he did not see corruption but was rebuilt in three days.

This temple – our Lord Jesus – will never be destroyed or desecrated but is eternally clean. Jesus will continue to be a place of refuge for sinners. And Jesus will continue to offer his body and blood as the pledge of the new covenant.

In Jesus we have an eternal temple for which we yearn and to which we are headed. And in Jesus, we have a king who keeps this temple clean and pure forever.

May God then keep us in this temple. And may God lift our spirits through the work of our great king.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY #530 (Stand)

No Temple Now, No Gift of Price (Alternate tune)

- 1 No temple now, no gift of price,
No priestly round of sacrifice,
Retain their ancient pow'rs.
As shadows fade before the sun
The day of sacrifice is done,
The day of grace is ours.**
- 2 The dying Lord our ransom paid,
One final full self-off'ring made,
Complete in ev'ry part.
His finished sacrifice for sins
The covenant of grace begins,
The law within the heart.**
- 3 In faith and confidence draw near,
Within the holiest appear,
With all who praise and pray;
Who share one family, one feast,
One great imperishable Priest,
One new and living way.**
- 4 For Christ is ours! With purpose true
The pilgrim path of faith pursue,
The road that Jesus trod;
Until by His prevailing grace
We stand at last before His face,
Our Savior and our God.**

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 #886 *The Day Thou Gavest*

- 1 The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended,
The darkness falls at Thy behest;
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.**
- 2 We thank Thee that Thy Church, unsleeping
While earth rolls onward into light,
Through all the world her watch is keeping,
And never rests by day or night.**
- 3 As o'er each continent and island
The dawn leads on another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor dies the strain of praise away.**
- 4 The sun, that bids us rest, is waking
Thy saints beneath the western skies,
And hour by hour, as day is breaking,
Fresh hymns of thankful praise arise.**
- 5 So be it, Lord! Thy throne shall never,
Like earth's proud empires, pass away;
Thy kingdom stands and grows forever,
Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

THOSE SERVING:

Greeter: Bob Juenger

Reader: Dan Buuck

Acknowledgments

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