



*Lenten Midweek Four*

Ascension Lutheran Church  
*"A Church for Families, a Family for Everyone"*  
Lenten Midweek Four – March 13, 2024

## LENTEN MIDWEEK FOUR

### **“You Meant It For Evil, But God Meant It For Good”**

Each year on Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion, we read the full Passion account at the end of the service. The Passion narrates Jesus' last hours of life, including His crucifixion and burial. Throughout most of the Church's history, Palm Sunday solely focused on Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. Church services typically featured a processional of palms, accompanied by an atmosphere of excitement as the Savior had arrived. However, many Christians attending only Sunday services missed the profound experience of the Passion, an integral part of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services. In response, the Church incorporated the complete Passion account reading at the conclusion of Palm Sunday services to remind those who attend only on Sundays of the suffering and death that Jesus endured for our redemption.

This year, we will dedicate additional time to the Passion account. Each midweek service in Lent will include a reading from the Gospel of Luke. Commencing with Ash Wednesday, we will journey through the final hours of Jesus' life. Luke provides unique insights into this important time, offering much to gain from contemplation and meditation on this writing. Our readings will be drawn from Luke 22-24, exploring instances where evil sought to prevail, but God's will ultimately triumphed for good. Rather than confining your exposure to the Passion account to Palm Sunday alone, we invite you to join us every Wednesday to reflect on our Savior's last hours. Your Lenten journey promises to be enriched with new insights and a deeper appreciation for the saving grace of God.

## + Preparation +

### Theme: “Faith for a Complicated World”

Just when we think we have it all figured out, the world, and even God, throw us a curveball. Simple faith is not a bad thing, but the reality of difficult circumstances and gray areas in our lives make it hard to follow God’s will. It might be easier to use black and white thinking, but the world and the people around us are very complicated. In fact, God’s plans might not make any sense to us, just as the followers of Jesus couldn’t understand how the Messiah could be arrested and facing the death penalty. When we struggle to see how God is working in the middle of all the evil, we can be confident that His plans are for good. God will redeem and restore all things in His timing, and our faith leads us to look in eager anticipation of that day.

#### Prelude

#### Welcome

#### My Faith Looks Up To Thee

- 1 My faith looks up to Thee,  
Thou Lamb of Calvary,  
Savior divine.  
Now hear me while I pray;  
Take all my guilt away;  
O let me from this day  
Be wholly Thine!
- 2 May Thy rich grace impart  
Strength to my fainting heart;  
My zeal inspire!  
As Thou hast died for me,  
Oh, may my love to Thee  
Pure, warm, and changeless be,  
A living fire!

- 3 While life's dark maze I tread  
And griefs around me spread,  
Be Thou my guide;  
Bid darkness turn to day,  
Wipe sorrow's tears away,  
Nor let me ever stray  
From Thee aside.
- 4 When ends life's transient dream,  
When death's cold, sullen stream  
Shall o'er me roll,  
Blest Savior, then, in love,  
Fear and distrust remove;  
O bear me safe above,  
A ransomed soul!

My Faith Looks Up To Thee, Text: Ray Palmer, 1808–87, Text: Public domain

## Invocation

### Opening Prayer

- P** Lord, in this Lenten season, as we walk through the wilderness of our lives in this world,
- C** **strengthen our faith in You, and though we may not understand our circumstances, help us to trust that all Your plans are for our good.**
- P** In this hour of worship and prayer, fill us with Your spirit and satisfy the hunger of our souls as we are fed by You, the Bread of Life.
- C** **May we never take for granted Your love and forgiveness shown to us through Your self-giving sacrifice on the old rugged cross. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Amen.**

### Confession and Forgiveness

- P** We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve Him as His dear children. But we have disobeyed Him and deserve only His wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to Him and plead for His mercy.

**C** Merciful Father in Heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against You and do not deserve to be called Your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to Your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.

**P** God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, He has removed your guilt forever. You are His own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to His will.

**C** Amen.

## Psalm 27

(**C** sung response – tune: “Rock Of Ages”)

**C** God my Savior and my Light  
Keeps me safe from dreadful fright.

**P** When evildoers assail me, uttering slanders against me, my adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall. Though a host encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war arise against me, yet will I be confident.

**C** God my Savior and my Light--  
May I serve Him day and night.

**P** One thing I have asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.

**C** God my Savior and my Light  
Watches with protecting might.

**P** He will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble. He will conceal me under the cover of His tent. He will set me high upon a rock.

**C** God my Savior and my Light  
Keeps me safe within His sight.

**P** And now my head shall be lifted up above all my enemies round about me; and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy. I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

**C** **God my Savior and my Light  
Answers me from heaven's height.**

**P** Hear me, Lord, when I call to You! Be merciful and answer me! When You said, "Come, seek My face," my heart replied, "Your face, Lord, I will seek. Do not hide Your face from me."

**C** **Let me see Your face aright,  
God my Savior and my Light!**

**P** O God of my salvation, You have been my help; do not turn away from me or desert me. Even if my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take care of me.

**C** **God my Savior and my Light  
Keeps me safe from dreadful fright.**

**P** Teach me Your way, O Lord; lead me on a right path because of my enemies. Protect me from their lies and threats.

**C** **God my Savior and my Light  
Watches with protecting might.**

**P** I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage. Wait for the Lord.

**C** **God my Savior and my Light--  
May I serve Him day and night!**

## **Theme Reading**

Luke 23:1–25 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Then the whole company of them arose and brought Him before Pilate. <sup>2</sup> And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a king." <sup>3</sup> And Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him, "You have said so." <sup>4</sup> Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." <sup>5</sup> But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."

<sup>6</sup> When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.<sup>7</sup> And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. <sup>8</sup> When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see Him, because he had heard about Him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by Him. <sup>9</sup> So he questioned Him at some length, but He made no answer. <sup>10</sup> The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing Him. <sup>11</sup> And Herod with his soldiers treated Him with contempt and mocked Him. Then, arraying Him in splendid clothing, he sent Him back to Pilate. <sup>12</sup> And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other. <sup>13</sup> Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, <sup>14</sup> and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining Him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against Him. <sup>15</sup> Neither did Herod, for he sent Him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. <sup>16</sup> I will therefore punish and release Him." <sup>18</sup> But they all cried out together, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas"— <sup>19</sup> a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. <sup>20</sup> Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, <sup>21</sup> but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify Him!" <sup>22</sup> A third time he said to them, "Why? What evil has He done? I have found in Him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release Him." <sup>23</sup> But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that He should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. <sup>24</sup> So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. <sup>25</sup> He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

## **Your Ways Are Not Our Ways**

(tune: Amazing Grace)

Your ways are not our ways, O God,  
Your thoughts, forever true.  
Your time is always perfect, Lord.  
We humbly trust in You.

We bow before You, Sovereign God.  
 Our hearts at last are still.  
 The root and fruit of prayer are this:  
 We only want Your will.  
 Our hopes and plans will disappoint  
 And pleasant streams run dry,  
 But You are rich, unchanging joy,  
 A constant, sweet supply.

Lord, You redeem each grief and loss  
 And draw our hearts above.  
 There all will show and shout and sing  
 That You are always love.

Your Ways Are Not Our Ways, WORDS: Ken Bible, © 2020 LNWhymns.com. CCLI song #7166220.

**Message**  
**“FAITH FOR A COMPLICATED WORLD”**

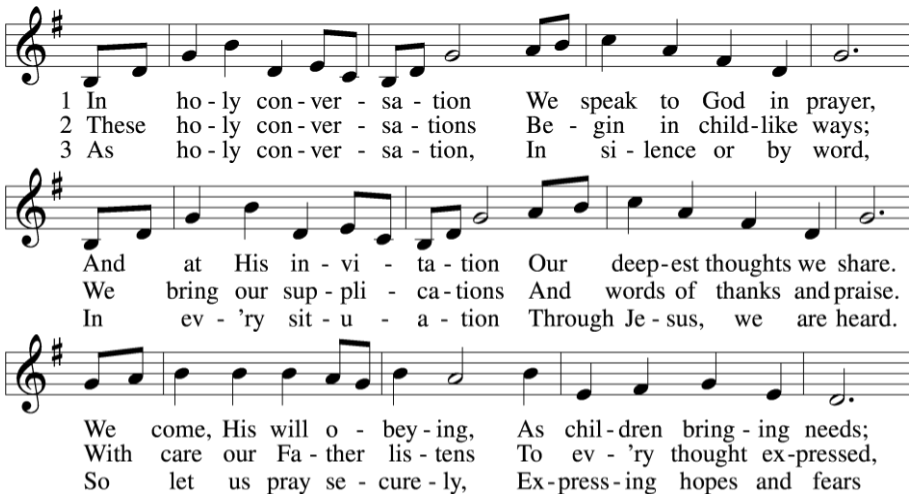
Pr. Jim Sprenkle  
 Luke 23:1–25

**Tithes and Offerings**

Please place your offering in the basket provided. (Our offerings are made as an act of worship, given in loving response to all that God has graciously given us, both materially and spiritually.)

**Prayer**

**In Holy Conversation**




1 In ho - ly con - ver - sa - tion We speak to God in prayer,  
 2 These ho - ly con - ver - sa - tions Be - gin in child-like ways;  
 3 As ho - ly con - ver - sa - tion, In si - lence or by word,

And at His in - vi - ta - tion Our deep - est thoughts we share.  
 We bring our sup - pli - ca - tions And words of thanks and praise.  
 In ev - 'ry sit - u - a - tion Through Je - sus, we are heard.

We come, His will o - bey - ing, As chil - dren bring - ing needs;  
 With care our Fa - ther lis - tens To ev - 'ry thought ex - pressed,  
 So let us pray se - cure - ly, Ex - press - ing hopes and fears





And to sup - port our pray - ing, His Spir - it in - ter - cedes.  
Then an - swers our pe - ti - tions In ways He knows are best.  
With con - fi - dence that sure - ly Our Fa - ther ev - er hears.

*(following each petition):*

- P** Hear us, O Lord,
- C** for Your mercy is great.

### Lord's Prayer

- C** 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.

### Luther's Evening Prayer

- C** I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

### Closing Reflection and Prayer

#### “Keep Your Eyes On God’s Love”

- P** All-wise Creator, loving Father, You do not cause the many horrendous events that plague our individual lives and our troubled race.
- C** Death was never Your will for us. We separated ourselves from You, the only source of life. Death is our doing, not Yours.

- P** Yet for all those who trust You, You gently, faithfully lead us through our worst nightmares, even the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4).
- C** **You are always true to Your promise: You work all things for good for those who love and trust You (Romans 8:28).**
- P** You redeem even our deepest griefs and most profound losses to bless Your people.
- C** **Your ways are more subtle, more nuanced, more intricate than our frantic and simplistic prayers – “Lord, do it all, and do it RIGHT NOW!”**
- P** You work and wait to do everything in exactly the right way at exactly the right time. There is no substitute for simply trusting You, no matter what.
- C** **Loving Father, we gladly leave Your work in Your hands to happen in Your time. Amen.**

## Blessing

- P** The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.
- C** **Amen.**

## Lord Of All Hopefulness

- 1 Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,  
Whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy:  
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,  
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.
- 2 Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,  
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe:  
Be there at our labors, and give us, we pray,  
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.
- 3 Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,  
Your hands swift to welcome, Your arms to embrace:  
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,  
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

4 Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,  
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm:  
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,  
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

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# Ascension Lutheran Church

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Church Office Hours: Monday–Friday 9am to 3pm

## **Our Mission Statement:**

*~Go and Share Jesus Christ~*

## **Our Vision Statement:**

*“Take part...Join Jesus on His mission.”*

The members of Ascension Lutheran Church are committed to being God’s witnesses in Gresham, and in all of Portland and the Northwest, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8):

With the universal Christian Church, we believe, teach and respond to the love of the Triune God— the Father, Creator of all that exists; the Son Jesus Christ, Who left His home in Heaven to become flesh and blood, to suffer and die for the sins of all peoples of the world, and Who rose from the grave, victorious over sin, death and the devil, that we too might live with Him in Heaven; and the Holy Spirit, Who creates faith in our hearts in Christ Jesus through God’s Word and Sacrament. The three Persons of the Holy Trinity are one God, co-equal and co-eternal. The core teachings of our faith from the Lutheran perspective can be summarized in three short phrases: Grace alone, Scripture alone, Faith alone.

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