

March 25 Mid Lent 2020

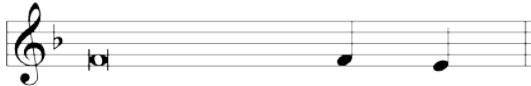
Evening Prayer

Service of Light

Stand



L Now is the time of God's fa - - vor;



C now is the day of sal - va - - tion.



L Turn us again, O God of our sal - va - - tion,



C that the light of Your face may shine on us.



L May Your justice shine like the sun;

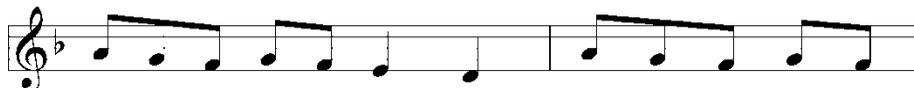


C and may the poor be lift - ed up.

Phos Hilaron



L Joy - ous light of glo - ry:



of the im - mor - tal Fa - ther; heav - en - ly, ho - ly,



bless - ed Je - sus Christ. We have come to the



set - ting of the sun, and we look to the eve - ning light.



We sing to God, the Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Spir - it:



You are wor - thy of be - ing praised with pure voic - es for -



ev - er. O Son of God, O Giv - er of life:



the u - ni - verse pro - claims Your glo - ry.

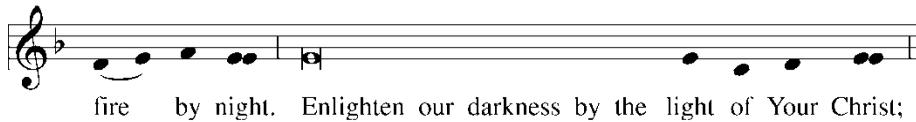
Thanksgiving for Light



Blessèd are You, O Lord our God, king of the u - ni - verse,



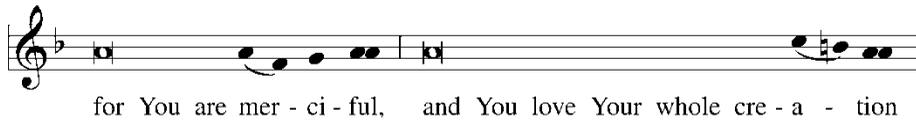
who led Your people Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of



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 mer - ci - ful, and You love Your whole cre - a - tion



and we, Your creatures, glo - ri - fy You, Father, Son, and Ho - ly Spir - it.



C A - men.

Sit

Psalmody

Psalm 141



C Let my prayer rise be - fore You as in - cense,



the lift - ing up of my hands as the eve - ning sac - ri - fice.



I O Lord, I call to You; come to me quick - ly; hear my voice



when I cry to You. **C** Let my prayer rise be - fore You as in-cense,



the lift-ing up of my hands as the eve-ning sac-ri-fice.



II Set a watch be-fore my mouth, O Lord, and guard the door of my lips.



I Let not my heart in-cline to an - y e - vil thing;



let me not be oc-cu-pied in wick-ed-ness with e-vil-do-ers.



II But my eyes are turned to You, O God; in You I take ref-uge.



Strip me not of my life. **C** Glo-ry be to the Fa - ther and



to the Son and to the Ho-ly Spir - it; as it was in



the be - gin - ning, is now, and will be for-ev-er. A - men.



Let my prayer rise be - fore You as in - cense,



the lift-ing up of my hands as the eve-ning sac-ri-fice.

L 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.

C Amen.

Office Hymn

540 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate



1 Christ, the Word of God in - car - nate, Lord and Son of
2 Christ, the liv - ing bread from heav - en, Food for bod - y,
3 Christ, the shoot that springs tri - um - phant From the stump of
4 Christ, our good and faith - ful shep - herd, Watch - ing all Your



A - bra - ham; Christ, the ra - diance of the Fa - ther,
food for soul; Christ, the man - na dai - ly giv - en,
Jes - se's tree; Christ, true vine, You nur - ture branch - es
lambs and sheep; Christ, the gate that guards the sheep - fold,



Per - fect God, the great I AM; Christ, the light, You
Nour - ish, strength - en, make us whole. Feed us with the
To bear fruit a - bun - dant - ly. Graft us in - to
Nev - er - fail - ing vig - il keep. When we stray, Good



shine un - van - quished, Light and life You bring to all; Light our
food of heav - en, Fore - taste of the feast to be; Quench our
You, O Sav - ior; Prune our hearts so we re - main Fruit - ful
Shep - herd, seek us, Find us, lift us, bear us home; Lamb of



path with Your own pres - ence, Grant us grace to heed Your call.
thirst with liv - ing wa - ter Spring - ing up e - ter - nal - ly.
branch - es in Your vine - yard Till e - ter - nal life we gain.
God, our shep - herd, keep us; Let us hear Your voice a - lone.

5 Christ, the way that leads unfailing
To the Father's home on high,
Christ, the truth that frees the captive,
Christ, the life that cannot die.
Mediator to the Father,
Sacrifice and great High Priest:
Lead us to Your heav'nly mansions,
There to share Your wedding feast.

D 6 Christ, the Alpha and Omega,
Christ, the firstborn from the dead,
Christ, the life and resurrection,
Christ, the Church's glorious head:
Praise and thanks and adoration
And unending worship be
To the Father and the Spirit
And to You eternally.

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Readings

Psalm 104.10-18

Psalm 104:10-18

You make springs gush forth in the valleys;

they flow between the hills;

[11] they give drink to every beast of the field;

the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

[12] Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell;

they sing among the branches.

[13] From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

[14] You cause the grass to grow for the livestock
and plants for man to cultivate,
that he may bring forth food from the earth

[15] and wine to gladden the heart of man,
oil to make his face shine
and bread to strengthen man's heart.

[16] The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

[17] In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has her home in the fir trees.

[18] The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Ezekiel 17.1-24

The word of the Lord came to me: [2] "Son of man, propound a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel; [3] say, Thus says the Lord God: A great eagle with great wings and long pinions, rich in plumage of many colors, came to Lebanon and took the top of the cedar. [4] He broke off the topmost of its young twigs and carried it to a land of trade and set it in a city of merchants. [5] Then he took of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil. He placed it beside abundant waters. He set it like a willow twig, [6] and it sprouted and became a

low spreading vine, and its branches turned toward him, and its roots remained where it stood. So it became a vine and produced branches and put out boughs.

[7] "And there was another great eagle with great wings and much plumage, and behold, this vine bent its roots toward him and shot forth its branches toward him from the bed where it was planted, that he might water it. [8] It had been planted on good soil by abundant waters, that it might produce branches and bear fruit and become a noble vine.

[9] "Say, Thus says the Lord God: Will it thrive? Will he not pull up its roots and cut off its fruit, so that it withers, so that all its fresh sprouting leaves wither? It will not take a strong arm or many people to pull it from its roots. [10] Behold, it is planted; will it thrive? Will it not utterly wither when the east wind strikes it—wither away on the bed where it sprouted?"

[11] Then the word of the Lord came to me: [12] "Say now to the rebellious house, Do you not know what these things mean? Tell them, behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took her king and her princes and brought them to him to Babylon. [13] And he took one of the royal offspring and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath (the chief men of the land he had taken away), [14] that the kingdom might be humble and not lift itself up, and keep his covenant that it might stand. [15] But he rebelled against him by sending his ambassadors to Egypt, that they might give him horses and a large army. Will he thrive? Can one escape who does such things? Can he break the covenant and yet escape?

[16] "As I live, declares the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwells who made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant with him he broke, in Babylon he shall die. [17] Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in war, when mounds are cast up and siege walls built to cut off many lives. [18] He despised the oath in breaking the covenant, and behold, he gave his hand and did all these things; he shall not escape. [19] Therefore thus says the Lord God: As I live, surely it is my oath that he despised, and my covenant that he broke. I will return it upon his head. [20] I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon

and enter into judgment with him there for the treachery he has committed against me. [21] And all the pick of his troops shall fall by the sword, and the survivors shall be scattered to every wind, and you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken."

[22] Thus says the Lord God: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. [23] On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. [24] And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it."

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

St Mark 4.30-32

And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? [31] It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, [32] yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

L In many and various ways, God spoke to His people of old by the prophets.

C **But now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.**

Sermon

Ezekiel 17.22-24 / Lent Mid A / Mar 25, 2020

In the Name of Jesus!

Tonight, our life together in God's Church is filled with uncertainty. We don't know when we will be able to gather together again as church. We don't know who among us may be affected by the current pandemic or how it will affect the life of our congregation. Around the world life has come to a screeching halt as governments order billions of people (e.g. India) to stay home and no one knows how long it will last or what the world will look like when it's over.

As uncomfortable as all this is, it really isn't all that unusual for God's people 'Living Among the Bible's Trees,' which of course is our theme for this Lent. Take Ezekiel for example, his book is 48 chapters (41 pages in my Bible) of mostly doom and gloom. Kingdoms rising and falling, whole cultures being displaced and moved about like pieces on a chess board. Powerful kings playing games with the lives of entire nations and of course, then there is the loss of the precious temple in Jerusalem, which God has Ezekiel prophesy with the example of the death of Ezekiel's own wife (Ezek 24.16).

In the midst of all this uncertainty and tragedy, God makes this beautiful promise, *"I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it"* (v 22-24).

Ezekiel and the people of God right up to Jesus' day interpret these verses to be a promise of the coming Kingdom of God and the rule of His Messiah as our King and Savior.

For my money, the most comforting part of the prophecy is verse 24, *“I am the Lord; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it”* (v 24).

With these Words, God is reminding us He has it all under control. He is the Lord in heaven, He has spoken, and no tree of any kingdom will be raised up or brought low but by His Almighty hand and His gracious will. It is the same, comforting idea as Psalm 46, *“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”* (Ps 46.10).

This is great to know and tremendously comforting, but there is just one rub. When we pray each day in the Lord's Prayer, *“Thy Kingdom come”* we can't help but notice as we look around that the world is falling apart all around us. Our prayer is interrupted by the uncomfortable recognition that God's Kingdom, God's Kingly rule through His Messiah, our Savior, does not look very impressive or comforting!

Jesus' disciples have exactly the same problem throughout the Gospels. After centuries of waiting for God's Christ to come, Jesus shows up, but His ministry only adds to the confusion. To be sure, the blind see, the deaf hear and the lame walk, but at the same time, Rome still rules and oppresses. The pastors in the temple are greedy, unholy and take advantage of the people for their own personal gain. And if people are willing to be honest and look into their own lives they must admit, 'I myself do not live up to the standard of my high calling as a child of God, son of the Promise and heir to the Kingdom of God.'

The Kingdom of God can only be seen with the eyes of faith.

Certainly the Kingdom of God will come one day in the fullness of His glory and in the sight of all people, but until then, *“faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”* (Heb 11.1).

Today we look around and struggle to believe in the Kingdom of God. In our life today we have the corona virus. Our parents had the great depression and the great war. Their parents had famine in Europe that displaced millions to America. Just like the first century, God’s Church today is not what it should be. The people that need to come and be changed by the Gospel, don’t. The people that are here don’t change enough. And all of us do less than we should in the church and still have a long way to go in our transition to becoming Christ-like in our lives, attitudes, words, actions and most of all, love for others.

Yet we *believe*, we *know* by faith that the Kingdom of God has come among us. We are able to see God’s Kingdom through eyes of faith each time our sins are healed in the absolution of God’s forgiveness. By God’s gift of faith, we see the dead raised to life in the water’s of Holy Baptism. God’s Kingdom truly comes among us and God’s will is certainly done each time His Word is preached in our sanctuary and taught in our Sunday Schools. Most wonderful of all, God’s promised Messiah, God’s Christ, shows up each Sunday, in the flesh, to take away your sins and mine and give us new life in the Sacrament of Jesus’ body and blood.

The Kingdom God has indeed come. The comfort of God’s Kingdom of Grace is our daily reality. Yet the *fullness* of the Kingdom of God’s glory remains hidden until the end when *“the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory [are established] forever and ever”* and *“God’s dwelling place is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God”* (Rev 12.10; 21.3).

I'll let you in on a little secret. In Jesus' time, the mustard plant was considered a weed. It was hard to kill, invasive, and it annoyed people to no end when it took root in their gardens. Today, Jesus says, you and I as God's Church, are like an annoying weed in the world's garden! But the day is coming when this weed will blossom into a beautiful cedar and our 'Life Among the Bible's Trees' will be glorious!

"Thus says the Lord God: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it" (v 22-24). Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus! Amen.

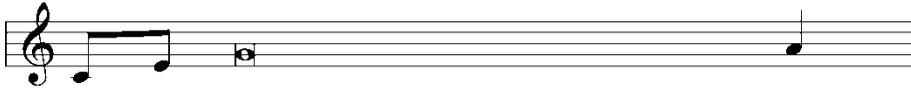
Stand

Magnificat

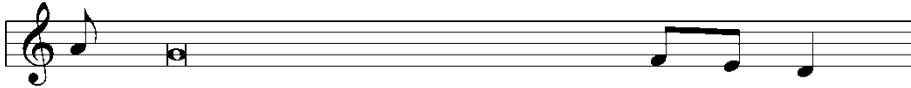
Refrain



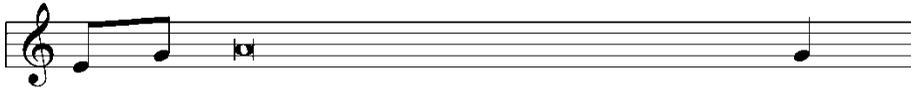
My soul mag-ni - fies the Lord, and my spir - it re -
joic - es in God, my Sav - ior. My soul mag-ni-fies the
Lord, and my spir - it re - joic - es in God, my Sav - ior.



1 For _____ He has re - - - - - garded
 2 For the Mighty One has done great things to me,
 3 He has shown strength with His arm;
 4 He has filled the hungry with good things,
 5 Glo - ry be to the Father and to the Son



1 the lowliness of His hand-maiden.
 2 and holy is His name;
 3 He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
 4 and the rich He has sent emp - - - - - ty a - way.
 5 and to the Ho - ly Spirit;



1 For be - hold, from this day
 2 and His mercy is on those who fear Him
 3 He has cast down the mighty from their thrones
 4 He has helped His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy
 5 as it was in the be - - - - - ginning,



1 all generations will call me blessèd.
 2 from generation to gen - er - ation. *Refrain*
 3 and has exalt - - - - - ed the lowly.
 4 as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for - ever.
 5 is now, and will be forever. A - men. *Refrain*

Sit

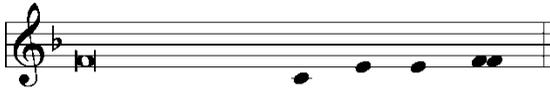
Offering

Offerings may be mailed to the church, 11453 E Wesley Ave, Aurora, 80016 or you may give online at mtolc.org.

Litany

Stand

The congregation's response may begin just as the leader's petition ends so that the word "Lord" is sung simultaneously by both leader and congregation.



L In peace let us pray to the Lord:



C Lord, have mer - cy.

- L For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For [*names of synodical and district presidents*], for all pastors in Christ, for all servants of the Church, and for all the people, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For [*name of president or monarch*], for all public servants, for the government and those who protect us, that they may be upheld and strengthened in every good deed, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For those who work to bring peace, justice, health, and protection in this and every place, let us pray to the Lord:
- C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For those who bring offerings, those who do good works in this congregation, those who toil, those who sing, and all the people here

present who await from the Lord great and abundant mercy, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

L For favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

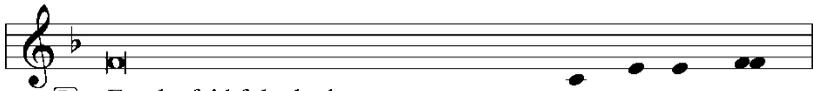
L For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and need, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

L For . . . [additional bids for prayer may be inserted here] . . . let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

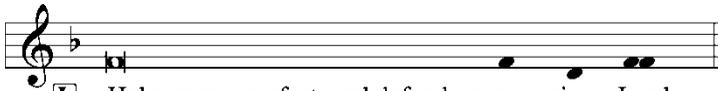
The prayers then continue:



L For the faithful who have gone before us and are with Christ, let us give thanks to the Lord:

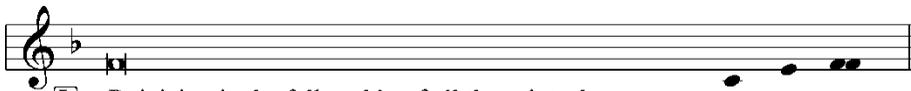


C Thanks be to God.



L Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord.

Silence for individual prayer may follow.



L Rejoicing in the fellowship of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ, our Lord:



C To You, O Lord.

Collect of the Day

L Let us pray.

O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

Collect For Peace

L O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, give to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey Your commandments and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

L Taught by our Lord and trusting His promises, we are bold to pray:

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.

Benedicamus

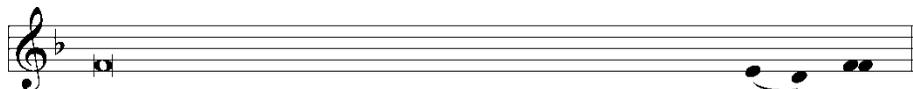


L Let us bless the Lord.



C Thanks be to God.

Benediction



P The almighty and merciful Lord,
the Father, the † Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and pre - serve you.



C A - men.

Hymn to Depart

881 Christ, Mighty Savior



And to the night give glit - ter - ing a -
 While in the heav - ens choirs of stars ap -
 With all cre - a - tion join - ing hearts and
 Strength for our weak hearts, rest for ach - ing
 In light or dark - ness wor - ship - ing our

dorn - ment, Stars in the heav - ens.
 pear - ing Hal - low the night - fall.
 voic - es Sing - ing Your glo - ry.
 bod - ies, Sooth - ing the wea - ry.
 Sav - ior Now and for - ev - er.

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