

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKY

20 November 2022

Last Sunday of the Church Year

The congregation stands at the pastor approaches the altar

THE INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

HYMN 436 COME, LET US JOIN OUR CHEERFUL SONGS

1 Come, let us join our cheerful songs With angels round the throne; Ten thousand thousand are their tongues, But all their joys are one.	2 “Worthy the Lamb that died”, they cry, “To be exalted thus”; “Worthy the Lamb”, our lips reply, “For He was slain for us.”
3 Jesus is worthy to receive All honour, power divine; And blessings, more than we can give, Be, Lord, for ever Thine.	4 Let all creation join in one To bless the sacred name Of Him that sits upon the throne, And to adore the Lamb.

The congregation stands

THE CONFESSION

M: Dear friends in Christ: Let us draw near to God our Father with a true heart to confess our sins, and ask Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

The congregation kneels or sits

M: Our help is in the name of the Lord. C: **He made heaven and earth.**

M: I said, I will confess my sins to the Lord. C: **Then He forgave the guilt of my sin.**

ALL: Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor helpless sinner, confess to You all my sins, and repent of all the evil I have done. I have deeply displeased You and deserve Your punishment in time and in eternity. But I am sorry for my sins, and I ask You, for the sake of the holy innocent sufferings and death of Your dear Son Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me. Amen.

M: I ask each of you in the presence of God who searches the heart: Do you confess that you have sinned, and do you repent of your sins?

C: I do.

M: Do you believe that Jesus Christ has redeemed you from all your sins, and do you desire forgiveness in His name?

C: I do.

M: Do you intend with the help of the Holy Spirit to live as in God's presence, and to strive daily to lead a holy life, even as Christ has made you holy?

C: I do.

M: Christ gave to His church the authority to forgive the sins of those who repent, and to declare to those who do not repent that their sins are not forgiven. Therefore, upon your confession, I, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God to all of you, and on behalf of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Peace be with you. **C: Amen.**

THE INTROIT

God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in troubles.
Therefore we shall not be afraid, though the earth quakes, and the mountains totter into the midst of the seas; though its waters roar and foam, and the mountains shake with their raging.
There is a river, the water-channels of which make the city of God rejoice, the holy place, the sanctuary of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her, she will not totter; God will help her when the morning appears.
Nations rage, kingdoms totter; He utters His voice, the earth melts.
The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.
Come; see some of the works of the LORD, the awesome things that He has brought on the earth!
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in pieces; He burns the chariots with fire.
"Stop, and know that I am God; I shall be exalted among the nations, I shall be exalted in the earth."
The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Psalm 46

THE GLORY TO THE FATHER

ALL: Glory to the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and will be for evermore. Amen.

THE LORD HAVE MERCY

M: Lord, have mercy.

C: Lord, have mercy.

M: Christ, have mercy.

C: Christ, have mercy.

M: Lord, have mercy.

C: Lord, have mercy.

THE GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

M: Glory to God in the highest.

C: And on earth peace, among men with whom He is pleased. We praise You, we bless You, we worship You, we glorify You, we give thanks to You for Your great glory, O Lord God, heavenly king, God, the Father Almighty. O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father: You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You take away the sin of the world; receive our prayer. You are seated at the right hand of God the Father; have mercy on us. For You alone are holy, You alone are Lord, You alone, O Christ, with the Holy Spirit, are most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE COLLECT

Lord Jesus Christ, You reign among us by the preaching of Your cross. Forgive Your people their offences, that we, being governed by Your bountiful goodness, may enter at last into Your eternal paradise; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

THE READINGS

Malachi 3:13-18

¹³ “You have been using harsh words against Me,” the LORD has said.

“However, you ask, ‘How have we been speaking against You to one another?’

¹⁴ “You have been saying, ‘It is useless to serve God. What gain has there been from keeping His Requirements and from walking about with a mournful expression before the LORD of hosts?’ ¹⁵ Now therefore, we call insolent people blessed. Even those who act wickedly prosper.”

They have even been putting God to the test and have been escaping.

¹⁶ Then those who used to fear the LORD spoke to one another. The LORD paid attention and listened. A book of remembrance was written in His presence of those who feared the LORD and respected His name.

¹⁷ “They will be Mine,” the LORD of hosts has said, “in the day when I make up My personal property. I shall have compassion on them as a man has compassion on his own son, who serves him.”

¹⁸ Then you will again see the difference between a righteous person and a wicked person, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

M: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Colossians 1:13-20

¹³ He has rescued us from the authority of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son, whom He loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵ He is the Image of the invisible God, the First-born of all creation, ¹⁶ since in Him all things in heaven and on earth have been created, the visible things and the invisible things, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things have been created through Him and for Him; ¹⁷ and He has been before all things, and all things hold together in Him.

¹⁸ He is also the Head of His body, the church. He is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead, that He Himself may come to have the first place among all things. ¹⁹ For it has pleased God that all His fullness should dwell in Him, ²⁰ and to reconcile all things to Himself through Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood of the cross.

M: This is the Word of the Lord. **C: Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah**

The congregation stands for the Gospel

THE GOSPEL

Pastor announces the Gospel and the congregation responds with:

Glory be to You, O Lord.

Luke 23:27-43

²⁷ A large crowd of the people followed Him. The women in the crowd were mourning and weeping for Him. ²⁸ Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me! Rather, weep for yourselves and for your children! ²⁹ For indeed the days are coming when people will say, ‘Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that have not borne children and the breasts that have not suckled!’ ³⁰ Then **people will begin to say to the mountains: ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills: ‘Cover us!’** ³¹ For, if they do these things to the green tree, what will be done to the dry one?”

³² Two other men, who were criminals, were also led out to be executed with Him.

³³ When they came to the place that is called “The Skull,” they crucified Him there with the criminals, one at His right. and the other at His left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them! For they do not know what they are doing.”

They divided His clothes among them by casting lots. ³⁵ The people stood there

watching. The rulers were also **sneering**, “He saved others. Let Him save Himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One!”

³⁶ The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and **offering Him wine-vinegar.**

³⁷ They said, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!”

³⁸ There was also a written notice above Him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there was blaspheming Him: “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!”

⁴⁰ However, the other criminal rebuked him. He said, “Do you not even fear God? For you are under the same condemnation. ⁴¹ We are also being punished justly. For we are getting what we deserve for what we have done. However, this Man has done nothing wrong.”

⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!”

⁴³ Jesus told him, “Truly, I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

M: This is the Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise be to You, O Christ.**

THE NICENE CREED

ALL: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe one holy Christian and apostolic Church; I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The congregation sits

CHILDREN'S ADDRESS

HYMN 166 ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME

1	2
All hail the power of Jesus' name,	Ye seed of Israel's chosen race,
Let angels prostrate fall;	Ye ransomed from the fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem,	Hail Him who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him Lord of all.	And crown Him lord of all.
Crown Him, yet martyrs of your God,	Hail Him, ye heirs of David's line,
Who from His altar call;	Whom David Lord did call,
Extol the stem of Jesse's rod,	The God incarnate, man divine,
And crown Him Lord of all.	And crown Him Lord of all.

3

Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget
The wormwood and the gall,
Go spread your trophies at His feet,
And crown Him Lord of all.
Let every tribe and every tongue
Before Him prostrate fall,
And shout in universal song,
The crowned Lord of all.

SERMON

The congregation stands to hear the text and then sits

THE GREATEST LOVE EVER GIVEN

Luke 23:27-43

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel read before, Luke 23:27-43: **A large crowd of the people followed Him. The women in the crowd were mourning and weeping for Him.** ²⁸ Jesus turned to them and said, **“Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me! Rather, weep for yourselves and for your children!** ²⁹ For indeed the days are coming when people will say, **‘Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that have not borne children and the breasts that have not suckled!’** ³⁰ Then people will begin to say to the mountains: **‘Fall on us!’** and to the hills: **‘Cover us!’** ³¹ For, if they do these things to the green tree, what will be done to the dry one?”

³² Two other men, who were criminals, were also led out to be executed with Him.

³³ When they came to the place that is called “The Skull,” they crucified Him there with the criminals, one at His right, and the other at His left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them! For they do not know what they are doing.”

They divided His clothes among them by casting lots. ³⁵ The people stood there watching. The rulers were also sneering, “He saved others. Let Him save Himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One!”

³⁶ The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him wine-vinegar. ³⁷ They said, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!”

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⁴⁰ However, the other criminal rebuked him. He said, “Do you not even fear God? For you are under the same condemnation. ⁴¹ We are also being punished justly. For we are getting what we deserve for what we have done. However, this Man has done nothing wrong.”

⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!”

⁴³ Jesus told him, “Truly, I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Bethlehem Toowoomba has organised today’s AELC service and concert to celebrate the completion of renovations on the church hall. As usual, final costs are always more than what has originally been quoted, and the renovation of the church hall was no exception, *but this didn’t seem to matter*. The call went out for financial help, and people and congregations responded. More than enough money was raised to complete the job. I am reminded of Malachi 3:10, where it is written, *“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.”*

This is the only example in Scripture of God permitting humans to test Him. Through Malachi, the LORD had been calling the people to repentance. In this

particular instance, tithing had been neglected. Malachi's people lived with the law of the tithe. However, God's complaint was not over money - as if He needed His people's money! - but over what the giving of that money demonstrated - love!

Some 490 years later, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians about how the law of the tithe had been lifted¹, but the law of love had not, and love demands disciplined giving.

Certainly, today the changeless God does not command that each of His people gives a certain amount, but out of love for Him and our fellowman, He asks that each determines *how much he is going to give and then gives!* Again, Paul wrote, this time to the Church at Corinth, "*On the first day of the week, let each of you put something aside as he may prosper and save it up, that no collections may be made at the time when I come!*" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Whatever we may be able to give for the ongoing support of the Gospel, is only because God Himself, out of love for mankind has provided, and what He still provides today is an abundance of blessings. Because of God's continual love and abundance of blessings, we not only have a beautiful church building here in Toowoomba but have also been blessed with a fine-looking hall that can be used for years to come. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

But today, I want to remind you that you have been blessed in another way far beyond anything that could be given as an earthly gift, a blessing that has been given out of love of God for you. That blessing is the gift of eternal life. Think about that for a moment. It was only a couple of weeks ago, as we celebrated All Saints' Day, that we were given a glimpse of heaven by John. In his vision, John saw the redeemed "*standing before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and carrying palm-branches in their hands. They called out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!" They have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and keep serving Him day and night in His Temple, and He who is sitting on the throne will shelter them with His tent. They will not be hungry any longer or thirsty any longer. The sun will certainly not beat on them or any scorching heat, because the Lamb, who is in the middle of the throne, will be their Shepherd and*

¹ Colossians 2:16-17

lead them to springs of the water of life. God will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:10, 14-17). I can’t wait to join in!

Of course, all this has only been made possible by the work of Jesus Christ, which is the real reason we celebrate. What is this work of Christ that has opened heaven for us? Luke gives us an answer in his Gospel.

Early in his Gospel, Luke had written how *“As the time was coming nearer for Jesus to be taken up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem”* (Luke 9:51). These words began the journey narrative that the Holy Spirit had inspired Luke to include in his account of the Gospel. For nearly fourteen chapters, Luke enables us to journey along with Jesus as He made His way to Jerusalem. There had been miracles, great teachings, interesting parables, and so forth, but always, in the background, there is the journey to Jerusalem, the journey to keep that appointment with a cross. Now, in today’s Gospel, we hear how Jesus kept His appointment. **“Two other men, who were criminals, were also led out to be executed with Him.”** ³³ **When they came to the place that is called “The Skull,” they crucified Him there with the criminals, one at His right, and the other at His left.”**

These events were no surprise to Jesus. He regularly took His disciples aside and said to them, *“Look! We are going up to Jerusalem, and all the things that have been written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.”* ³² *For He will be handed over to the Gentiles and will be mocked, insulted and spat on.* ³³ *They will scourge Him and kill Him, and on the third day He will rise again”* (Luke 18:31-33). He also spoke to other people like Nicodemus and said, *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up”* (John 3:14). There can be no doubt that Jesus knew exactly what was waiting for Him in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, He did not try to avoid it but *set His face to go to Jerusalem*.

The Holy Spirit, in His infinite knowledge and perfect wisdom, elected to divide the narrative of the crucifixion between the four accounts of the Gospel. Each of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, add something special to our understanding of the events of that day. Today, we heard Luke focus on *the words of forgiveness* that Jesus spoke from the cross.

I am sure that members of the crucifixion squad had heard all kinds of words out of the mouths of their victims: cursing, begging, cries of anguish and so forth. Even so, I must imagine that none of the soldiers had ever heard someone

pray for them when they crucified him. How strange it must have been to hear one of the victims say, **“Father, forgive them! For they do not know what they are doing.”** Forgiveness was probably the last thing they had expected from one of their victims.

These words of Jesus have incredible comfort for the sensitive soul who knows that he or she sins more often than they know. Can I really have forgiveness for a sin even if I don’t even notice that it is a sin? Here we see Jesus praying for the forgiveness of executioners *who do not know what they are doing*.

Not long ago, we celebrated the Reformation, and, pondering the events that happened at that time, I can’t help but think about the teachings of Martin Luther’s childhood church. You see, the person who went to confession had to confess *all* their sins. If you left out a sin, that was more purgatory for you. Before Luther discovered the Gospel, he had driven his father-confessor crazy. If he were leaving confession and remembered a sin, he would immediately turn around and go back to confession. He had wanted to make sure that he had as few unconfessed sins as possible. What a comfort it would have been to him to know that the very first words of forgiveness that Jesus offered up on the cross were words of forgiveness to men who did not even know that they had sinned!

In his explanation of confession in his Small Catechism, Martin Luther included the question, *“What sins should we confess?”* His answer was, *“Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord’s Prayer; but before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.”* The Augsburg confession, one of the confessions that are part of the constitution of our congregations also states: *Our churches teach that naming every sin is not necessary and that consciences should not be burdened with worry about naming every sin. It is impossible to recount all sins, as Psalm 19:12 testifies: “Who can discern his errors?” Also Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” If only sins that can be named are forgiven, consciences could never find peace. For many sins cannot be seen or remembered (AC: II, art. xxv, par. 7-9).* We can confess and receive forgiveness even for sins we don’t know about, even as Jesus forgave the sins of those soldiers who crucified Him.

This means that if or when you feel the need to go to your pastor for private confession, you do not need to worry that you must tell every last little detail of

every sin. Instead, you can confess the sins that bother you in anticipation of receiving absolution, that is, forgiveness for those sins. This returns both public and private confession and absolution to their original purpose - that the sinner who confesses may receive absolution and return to his or her home justified before God.²

The other word of forgiveness that Luke recorded in today's Gospel went to the criminal who occupied the cross next to Jesus. This was a man who knew about his sin. He confessed for himself and the other criminal and said, "**We are also being punished justly. For we are getting what we deserve for what we have done.**" With these words, he confessed that he had earned his place on his cross with his crimes. Jesus assured him of his forgiveness. He told him, "**Truly, I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise.**"

The words of Jesus to this criminal bring comfort for those who wonder if *they are too evil to receive forgiveness.* The criminal who admitted that he deserved crucifixion had to have done something terrible. Rome did not crucify people for stealing an apple or starting an argument with someone. This criminal must have been a murderer or something along those lines. Have you ever heard someone say something like, "*I think the roof would cave in if I ever entered a church?*" You can give the comfort of Jesus' words to that person. You can tell them that the God-man who died on the cross also died for them, that there is no sin that is more powerful than God's forgiveness. The primary purpose of gathering for worship is for God to serve us with the forgiveness of sins. In this divine service, God serves us with His forgiveness, which is *infinitely more powerful than any sin you may have committed.*

So, it is that in these brief few words from the account of Jesus dying on the cross, we already have a demonstration of what it means that the forgiveness of sins is for everyone. This is what the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to say in today's Second Reading: "*For it has pleased God that all His fullness should dwell in Him,* ²⁰ *and to reconcile all things to Himself through Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood of the cross*" (Colossians 1:19-20). These words teach us that the blood of Christ on the cross reconciled **all things** to God. All things definitely include all people.

² Luke 18:14

It includes the criminal dying on the cross next to Christ, and it includes us, *no matter what sin burdens us with its guilt.*

Here we learn the alternative to the terror of God's fiery wrath against our sin. When Jesus went to the cross, He endured the wrath of God against our sins. He satisfied God's justice on our behalf. We can be assured of this because God the Father raised Him from the dead, accepting His death as punishment for our sins. Now we have been adopted into His family. Jesus has made it possible for us to stand before God and see - not the terrifying Judge of the Law - but a loving Father. Through Jesus we receive - not the eternal punishment we deserve - but life forever in the joy of His presence. He has given us the right to be called the children of God³ and to follow Him in His resurrection to eternal life.

Today is the last Sunday of the church year. During this church year, we have focused primarily on the Gospel according to Luke. Yes, we have heard from Matthew, Mark, and John from time to time, but most of the Gospels for this year were taken from Luke. Next Sunday, we shall start a new church year that focuses on the Gospel according to Matthew.

During this year, Luke has given an account of Christ that shows us a great journey. The journey is a round trip. It began as the Son of God descended from His throne to take on our human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. It ended as the same Son of God ascended to the right hand of the Father. During this journey, He redeemed mankind from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He has made it possible for us to stand before God without fear. Christ's journey has opened up the way to heaven for all who believe in His name. For those who believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin, the way of life leads - not to a day of terror - but to an eternity of heavenly joy.

So, as we gather to rejoice and thank God for the gifts He continues to graciously give us on this earth - especially the gift of a place to gather and worship as well as a hall where we are able to carry out all kinds of events - Bible studies, Sunday School classes, concerts, and so on, the greatest rejoicing is reserved for the work of His Son, Jesus Christ, who, out of love for us, acting on behalf of His Father, has given us entry into His eternal kingdom, where we shall be with Him for evermore. *"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matthew 25:34). Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

³ John 1:12

During the singing of the next hymn, the offering will be received during the hymn

HYMN 70 STRICKEN, SMITTEN, AND AFFLICTED

1
Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
See Him dying on the tree;
'Tis the Christ, by man rejected,
Yes, my soul, 'tis He, 'tis He.
'Tis the long expected prophet,
David's Son, yet David's Lord;
Proofs I see sufficient of it:
'Tis the true and faithful Word.

3
Ye who think of sin but lightly,
Nor suppose the evil great,
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the sacrifice appointed;
See who bears the awful load;
'Tis the Word, the Lord's anointed,
Son of man and Son of God.

2
Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning,
Foes insulting His distress;
Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would interpose to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that Justice gave.

4
Here we have a firm foundation,
Here the refuge of the lost;
Christ's the rock of our salvation,
His the name of which we boast.
Lamb of God, for sinners wounded,
Sacrifice to cancel guilt!
None shall ever be confounded
Who on Him their hope have built.

THE OFFERTORY

ALL: Create in me a clean heart O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing Spirit.

PRAYER FOR THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

Almighty and most merciful heavenly Father, You have created all things by Your powerful word. You decide the history of every nation, and direct the life of every human being. We acknowledge Your rule over all things, but we come confidently before You with our prayer and praise, because You are our loving Father in Jesus Christ.

We thank You for the plenteous daily blessings that You graciously give us. You send rain; the fields are filled with flocks; and the ground produces a rich harvest of food. You make the earth rich and fertile, and bless our labour. We praise You that You open Your hand, and satisfy the needs of Your whole creation. We thank You for the facilities across the AELC, which You have graciously provided for us to come together freely to worship You.

But we thank You above all for the wonderful gift of Your Son Jesus Christ. We thank You that His obedience has covered our failure to obey Your commandments to love You and our neighbour perfectly. Through His death we have been set free from the slavery of sin and death, and through His resurrection we have been made citizens of heaven. You have given us the sure hope of the resurrection of our bodies. You have promised that when our Lord returns He will change our weak, mortal bodies and make them glorious like His own. Grant that, as we live out our earthly lives, we may wait eagerly for His coming, to liberate us from this imperfect world and to give us the perfection of heaven. Give us power through this hope to purify our lives and to set our hearts on things above.

Send forth Your Word into all the world. Help Christian people everywhere to rejoice in Your truth and to sing of Your love, so that Your ways may be known by all people and Your salvation received everywhere with joy.

Pour out Your blessing on our country. Grant that all who make and administer our laws may honour and fear You. Guide them by Your wisdom, so that justice, mercy, righteousness, and peace may flourish, and all evil and violence be suppressed. Give all citizens of this country an obedient spirit; lead them to respect their leaders.

Keep Your Church alive through the power of the Gospel. Fill it with Your Spirit so that it may serve You with a cheerful and sacrificial love. Grant that all Your people may follow the example of those who are leaders in the new life of the Spirit. Teach the youth of the Church to consider everything else inferior compared with knowing Christ as their Saviour and Lord. Help all our baptised children to love and follow Jesus Christ with joy and gladness.

Give a quiet confidence to all who are troubled in body, mind, or spirit. Grant them a strong faith in Your compassion, and ardent hope. Watch over our members who are in hospital or recovering from illness or receiving ongoing treatment for various ailments. Remind them of Your great care and mercy, and lead them to full recoveries, or patience to endure their sufferings.

In this world without God and without hope, grant that we may be watchful for the return of the great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Grant that we may see with our own eyes His glory on Your throne as David's lord and King of kings. This we ask in the name and for the sake of Him who is our Saviour, Lord, and King for ever. Amen.

HYMN 284 O LIVING BREAD FROM HEAVEN

1

O living Bread from heaven,
 How dost Thou feed Thy guest!
 The gifts to me now given
 Bestow true joy and rest;
 For while the faith within me
 Is quickened by this food,
 My soul doth gaze upon Thee,
 My highest, only good.

3

O let the food here taken
 Create such life in me,
 That sin may be forsaken
 And I may cleave to Thee,
 That all my soul be heedful
 How I Thy love may know;
 For this alone is needful:
 Thy love in me should glow.

2

O wondrous food of blessing,
 O cup that heals my woes,
 My heart, this gift possessing,
 In thankful song o'erflows.
 Deign, Lord, in grace to hear me
 As now my song I raise;
 'Tis meet that I draw near Thee,
 That I should sing Thy praise.

4

How blest am I, receiving
 This heavenly manna here;
 These mercies of Thy giving
 Call forth my praise sincere.
 On earth I ever praise Thee,
 Thy gifts my hymns employ,
 And yonder I shall raise Thee
 Glad songs of endless joy.

THE PREFACE

M: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts. **C: We lift them up to the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord. **C: For that is fitting and right.**

M: It is truly fitting and right, and for our lasting good, that we should at all times and in all places, give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord; For He has taken upon Himself our sin, that we, being dead to sin, should live to righteousness. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we adore and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

THE SANCTUS

ALL: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; heaven and earth are full of Your glory, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

M: 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.

**ALL: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.**

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples and said, Take and eat; this is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.

In the same way He took the cup, after the supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and said, Drink of it all of you; this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

THE PEACE

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always. **C: Amen.**

THE LAMB OF GOD

ALL: O Christ, Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us Your peace. Amen.

The congregation sits

THE DISTRIBUTION

HYMN 285 TO THY MOST HOLY SUPPER, LORD

1	2
To Thy most holy supper, Lord,	Thine own saw Thee ascend on high
In love dost Thou invite us,	Where Thou dost dwell in glory;
Thy body and Thy blood our food	Thou art unseen to mortal eye,
To strengthen and delight us.	By faith must we adore Thee:
As weary souls, by sin oppressed,	And yet, as promised in Thy Word,
We come to Thee for needed rest,	Thou everywhere art present, Lord,
For comfort and for pardon.	With Thine own Church abiding.
3	4
“This is My body, this My blood”:	My heart can neither grasp nor know
We eat and drink, believing;	How in so many places
With bread and cup the heavenly food	Thy body can be here below,
Our lips are here receiving.	Yet faith this truth embraces.
Thy word remains for ever true;	How this can be I leave to Thee,
What Thou hast spoken Thou canst do,	Sufficient is Thy word for me;
For Thou, Lord, art almighty.	’Tis Thy word: I believe it.

5
Grant that o'er sin I truly grieve
With contrite heart and lowly,
Nor here unworthily receive
Thy supper, Lord most holy.
Refresh me by Thy saving grace,
That, trusting Thee throughout my days,
I live to Thee, my Saviour.

6
For Thy consoling supper, Lord,
Be praised throughout all ages!
Preserve it, for with one accord
The world against it rages.
Grant that Thy body and Thy blood
May be my comfort and blest food
In my last moments. Amen.

The congregation stands

**ALL: Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace:
according to Your word.**

**For my eyes have seen Your salvation:
which You have prepared in the presence of all people;
A light to reveal You to the nations:
and the glory of Your people Israel.
Glory to the Father and the Son:
and the Holy Spirit.**

**As it was in the beginning is now:
and will be for evermore. Amen.**

THE GREETING

M: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

THE THANKSGIVING

M: O give thanks to the Lord for He is good. Hallelujah!

C: For His love endures for ever. Hallelujah!

M: Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, you did not spare Your own Son, but gave Him up for us all: As we have received His body and blood in the Sacrament, let us continually live in Him and He is us, so that, as Your children, we may walk in Your ways and serve You all the days of our life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **C: Amen.**

M: Let us bless the Lord. **C: God be praised for evermore.**

THE BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favour, and give you peace.
C: Amen. Amen. Amen!

HYMN 473 FOR ME TO LIVE IS JESUS

1

For me to live is Jesus,
To die is gain for me;
Then whensoever He pleases
I meet death willingly.

3

My woes are nearly over,
Though long and dark the road;
My sin His merits covers,
And I have peace with God.

5

So let me, to Thee cleaving
Through all death's agony,
Then fall asleep believing,
And wake in heaven with Thee.

2

For Christ, my Lord and brother,
I leave this world so dim,
And gladly seek that other
Where I shall be with Him.

4

In my last hour, O grant me
To slumber soft and still,
No doubts to vex and haunt me,
Safe anchored on Thy will.

Lutheran Worship Reflects the Theology of the Cross, not the Theology of Glory

It is this truth that all of God's glory for our salvation is hidden in the cross and all that we have to bring Him is our sin and guilt that makes the liturgy so eternally relevant, so rich, so comforting. For in it we despair, since we have nothing good to bring to God as a contribution to our salvation. And in it we rejoice because God gives us everything in the cross by which He won our forgiveness.

A theology of glory is that which imagines that salvation is tied to outward greatness and success or even to outward holiness and virtue. And that is at the heart and core of Luther's anger against the Roman church, that it was drowning in a theology of glory. The works of monks and nuns looked so glorious and holy on the outside. There they were, a collection of people, dressed in drab, under the yoke of self-imposed poverty, celibacy, and obedience. They spent their whole lives in prayer, some locked away from the world completely behind their cloister walls. And with all of that they imagined (and monastic vows to this day assert the same!) that they had chosen a life closest to perfection. They claimed that their vows were of at least as much value as Baptism. They declared that not only would they help to save themselves by their works but that they even had merits left over to help save others. That Jesus never asked anyone to do such things slowed them down not a bit. That the Scriptures condemn and damn such self-righteousness likewise hindered them not in the least.

And then there was the pope himself. He called himself then and calls himself to this day the vicar of Christ on earth and the successor of St. Peter. He is considered and

considers himself so close to the heart of God that he alone can interpret the Scriptures. Yes, he can even proclaim doctrines not in the Bible and doctrines contrary to the clear words of the Bible. What could be more glorious, more holy looking than that! Never mind the fact that God has made it clear that His Word alone is sufficient for all doctrine.

All of it, Luther declares, is the devil's spawn, the opposite of the gospel. For all of it turns our eyes away from Christ and His lowliness to man and his imagined glory. It robs Christ of His glory as the only Saviour. It therefore destroys the Christian's only source of hope and comfort; for apart from Christ and His Word all hope and comfort is only a devilish delusion, unsure and insecure. To this day Catholicism has not rid itself of that theology of glory. With crosses everywhere and a crucifix at every turn, the priest at mass nevertheless dares to declare that he is repeating in an unbloody way the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. And the priest has been made worthy to offer such a sacrifice by his holy celibacy and his anointing from the pope or his minions. How horrible! Even the sufferings of the sick and disabled are praised as works which complete, or at the very least participate in, the work of Christ that saves. How monstrous!

Neither is the worship on the opposite side of the theological error spectrum any better, the worship that is designed merely to appeal to the senses – “whoopie worship.” The highly emotional praise song that focuses on God's might and power, the emotion-laden sermon that whips up the crowd to bliss-filled hallelujahs may sound like a heaven on earth. But where is the cross? Whether it is the noise of modern-day tongue speakers, or the drama of a “miracle service” or entertainment central with a cross placed somewhere up front, they all have the one thing in common: They turn people away from the confession of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) or that of the tax collector smiting on his breast in the temple (Luke 18:9-14). They turn the audience away from despair in all that we are or hope to be. They instead titillate the senses with the amusing. They challenge the soul with the trite and the trivial. They encourage a salvation that begins in man's feelings and ends with his own obedience to the law.

It is a worship that misses the depth of our sin and guilt. And missing the totality of our need, people miss as well the totality of the solution to that need in the richness of God's grace in the cross of Christ. It is a theology of glory. It is as much to be abhorred and shunned as its Roman cousin. The joy of the liturgy is the joy of hearing that sin has been forgiven, all of it, in the hidden mercy of the One who reveals Himself in the Word of grace and pardon. It is the joy of the one who sees that his greatest, his only

real need, is for relief from the suffering of guilt and death that only Christ could give at the cross. In the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther says:

This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and in general, good to evil. These are the people whom the apostle calls “enemies of the cross of Christ” [Phil. 3:18], for they hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works... God can be found only in suffering and the cross, as has already been said. Therefore, the friends of the cross say that the cross is good and works are evil, for through the cross works are destroyed and the old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified. *It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God’s* [emphasis added]. (Luther’s Works, vol. 31., p. 53.)

COMING SERVICES

27 November 1 Advent (Year A)	4 December 2 Advent	11 December 3 Advent						
8.30am OAK LR (Harvest) 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC	10.00am HC & Downs Children’s Christmas Service at Greenwood. 9.00am MARBURG LR	8.30am OAK LR 8.30am TMBA HC (note time) 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN PR Harvest Festival & Baptism						
Sunday, 27 November								
<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">READINGS: Isaiah 2:1-5;</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Romans 13:8-14;</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Matthew 21:1-11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>OAKEY: Deuteronomy 26:1-11;</td> <td>2 Corinthians 9:6-15;</td> <td>Luke 12:13-21</td> </tr> </table>			READINGS: Isaiah 2:1-5;	Romans 13:8-14;	Matthew 21:1-11	OAKEY: Deuteronomy 26:1-11;	2 Corinthians 9:6-15;	Luke 12:13-21
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HYMNS: 1 19 9 (839 290) 11 OAKEY: 564 814 809 (from the LSB) 563								
Sunday, 4 December								
<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">READINGS: Isaiah 11:1-10;</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Romans 15:4-13;</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Matthew 3:1-12</td> </tr> </table>			READINGS: Isaiah 11:1-10;	Romans 15:4-13;	Matthew 3:1-12			
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HYMNS: 12 13 2 622								

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thursday 24 November, 10.00am. Bible Study at Lowood.
 Friday 25 November, 7.30pm. Oak/Aub/Grn combined Bible Study at Oakey. Bring something for a shared supper.
 Sunday, 27 November, 6.30pm. Advent Tea at Aubigny. Could each family please provide a plate and something for dessert? After tea we shall hold an Advent program.
 Please take home with you today a Devotion Book in preparation for the Advent Season, beginning next Sunday.