

## MID-WEEK LENTEN SERVICE 6, 2025

### THE HAND OF THE LORD WHO HOLDS ALL THINGS

To the faithless, unrepentant world, taken together with the climax of the events of Holy Week, it appears that, after all, Jesus ends up only a disappointment, dead and gone! To the eyes of faith, however, all His deeds, including His suffering and death, describe the most powerful and mighty act of God, by which He redeems and saves the world and us!

The church has always claimed that, before and after all, Jesus Christ indeed holds all things. By faith in Jesus, we know that we are forgiven, renewed, redeemed, and destined for eternal glory.



*Stand*

- P O Lord, open my lips,  
C **and my mouth will declare Your praise.**  
P Make haste, O God, to deliver me;  
C **make haste to help me, O Lord.**

**PSALM**

*Psalm 95:1-7a*

- P Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;  
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!  
C **Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving;  
let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!**  
P For the LORD is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.  
C **In His hand are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains are His also.**  
P The sea is His, for He made it,  
and His hands formed the dry land.  
C **Oh come, let us worship and bow down;  
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!**  
P For He is our God,  
C **and we are the people of His pasture,  
and the sheep of His hand.**  
C **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.**

**SALUTATION AND COLLECT**

- P The Lord be with you.  
C **And also with you.**
- P Let us pray.  
C **Almighty and everlasting God, You despise nothing You have made  
and forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and  
contrite hearts that lamenting our sins and acknowledging our  
wretchedness we may receive from You full pardon and forgiveness;  
through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with  
You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

**C O** come, let us sing to the Lord,  
 let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.  
 Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving,  
 let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise.  
 For the Lord is a great God  
 and a great king above all gods.  
 The deep places of the earth are in His hand;  
 the strength of the hills is His also.  
 The sea is His, for He made it,  
 and His hand formed the dry land.  
 O come, let us worship and bow down,  
 let us kneel before the Lord, our maker.  
 For He is our God,  
 and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

P Blessed be God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**C O** come, let us worship Him.

THE WORD THAT SPOKE IN DARKNESS

<p>1          The Word that spoke in darkness          And promised coming light          Kept guiding through the ages          Until the times was right          To take on flesh and follow          The Father's good command          And dwell among His people          The kingdom now at hand.</p>	<p>3          The Christ proclaimed His vict'ry          With ev'ry act of grace"          The outcast shown compassion          And God's own holy face          As Jesus looked with favour          On all from ev'ry land          Who needed life and healing          From His almighty hand.</p>
<p>2          The Saviour came to conquer          And meet His mission's aim          Up ending Satan's terror          Creation to reclaim          By walking on the waters          So we by faith may stand          With trust in Him whose rescue          Is offered by His hand.</p>	<p>4          The Prince of Peace continued          With each new task complete          At cross and tomb and glory          Upon His royal seat          Deliverance accomplished          Exactly as He plane'          Our King will raise in welcome          His pierced and risen hand.</p>

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<sup>1</sup>Venite is the name given to Psalm 95, used as a Song of Praise in Christian liturgy, chiefly at matins.

## Reading

P A reading from John 3:22-36

After this, Jesus went into the country of Judea with His disciples and there He spent some time with them and baptised. <sup>23</sup> John was also baptising at Aenon, near Salim, because water was plentiful there. People were coming to him and being baptised, <sup>24</sup> for John had not yet been thrown into prison. <sup>25</sup> Then an argument developed between some of John's disciples and a Jew about purification. <sup>26</sup> People came to John and told him, "Rabbi, He who was with you on the other side of the Jordan and to whom you gave your testimony, look! He is baptising, and everyone is going to Him."

<sup>27</sup> John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it has been given to him from heaven. <sup>28</sup> You yourselves bear me witness that I said, 'I am not the Christ but have been sent ahead of Him.' <sup>29</sup> The One who has the bride is the Bridegroom. However, the friend of the Bridegroom, who stands and listens to Him, is full of joy when he hears the Bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine has been made complete. <sup>30</sup> He must become greater, but I must become less. <sup>31</sup> The One who comes from above is above all. The one who comes from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks from the earth. The One who comes from heaven is above all others. <sup>32</sup> He is testifying to what He has seen and heard, but no one is accepting His testimony. <sup>33</sup> The person who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true. <sup>34</sup> For the One whom God has sent is speaking the Words of God. For God is giving the Spirit without limit. <sup>35</sup> The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in His hand. <sup>36</sup> He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not believe in the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## Responsory (Lent)

*LSB 222*

P We have an advocate with the Father; Jesus is the propitiation for our sins.

C **He was delivered up to death; He was delivered for the sins of the people.**

P Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is put away.

C **He was delivered up to death; He was delivered for the sins of the people.**

P We have an advocate with the Father; Jesus is the propitiation for our sins.  
C **He was delivered up to death; He was delivered for the sins of the people.**

### **Pastor's Address**

John 3:22-36 The Hand of the Lord Who Holds All Things

**Grace and peace to you all from our risen Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.**

**The text for our sermon is John 3:22–36 read before:**

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Perhaps you are familiar with the old song, “He’s got the whole world in His hands.” It’s a traditional African-American spiritual hymn, first published in 1927. Maybe you sang this song in Sunday School.

Everything in all of creation is in the Lord’s hands. How well Psalm 95 puts it when it proclaims that “*the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!*”

Indeed, our very lives are in His hands, including our past, present, and future. From the beginning of creation to the end is in His hands.

But how we try to wrest control from God’s hands and put it into our own! We sometimes get the illusion that things are in our control. So often, we surround ourselves with things that give us this illusion. Constant dings can easily consume us, buzzes and alarms by little devices that we keep in our pockets that tell us “new message,” “new reminder,” or “breaking news.” It all collectively adds up to task after task. You feel like you should be getting somewhere, responding to important matters, and acquiring information to understand the world, but it often feels like our hands are tied at the end of each day. Now add on top of this the things that we know we have no control over, such as the happenings across the world, and it may make us want to throw our hands up in the air. Maybe, just maybe, you start to wonder, “*Does God have the whole world in His hands?*” because there are many times when our attempts at explanations will not do.

John the Baptist proclaimed the truth. The Apostle John reports how **“an argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a Jew about purification. <sup>26</sup> People came to John and told him, “Rabbi, He who was with you on the other side of the Jordan and to whom you gave your testimony, look! He is baptising, and everyone is going to Him.”**”

John was baptising. Jesus was baptising. Although both taught repentance and faith, it wasn’t long before a dispute broke out involving John’s disciples and an unnamed Jew. They spoke about the baptisms, apparently arguing whether one was “more beneficial” than the other.

At the root of the problem was an increasing sense of opposition and jealousy toward Jesus among John’s disciples. Since Jesus came on the scene, they complained that “everyone” was going to Him. Bigger and bigger crowds followed Jesus as fewer and fewer came to John. Was that right?

**“John answered, “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it has been given to him from heaven. <sup>28</sup> You yourselves bear me witness that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but have been sent ahead of Him.’ <sup>29</sup> The One who has the bride is the Bridegroom. However, the friend of the Bridegroom, who stands and listens to Him, is full of joy when he hears the Bridegroom’s voice. Therefore, this joy of mine has been made complete. <sup>30</sup> He must become greater, but I must become less.”**”

John’s answer revealed that he clearly knew his place in God’s plan. John spoke the general truth. We have what we have and we are what we are *only* because God has given it to us from His gracious hands. We need to work within that reality to the glory of God.

John’s God-given role was to prepare the way for Christ. He found full joy in doing that. He likened himself to the friend of the bridegroom. Today we may think of him as the best man at a wedding. His great joy is to see the bride (the church) and the bridegroom (Christ) come together. He waits, in this case, with the bride. When the bridegroom appears, all attention necessarily turns to him. The best man says his toast and recedes gladly into the background.

John knew the Messiah was coming and was now here, and boldly proclaimed, **“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. <sup>36</sup> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”**”

The Father had given all things into the hand of His Son (Ephesians 1:10). The fullness of God's Spirit, the fullness of heaven and earth, and the fullness of life belong to Jesus Christ and are found in Him. Everyone born into this world is by nature an object of God's wrath, but whoever believes in the Son of God has eternal life and has escaped God's wrath. However, anyone who doesn't believe the Son but disobeys will not see life. That person remains under God's wrath.

We have said before that Jesus is the Word made flesh. He is before all, and all things have been created through Him. Now, John is echoing the truth. If you want to know God, look to Christ. To hear the words of Christ is to hear the words of God. The Father has sent the Son and loves the Son, and all things are given into His hand.

Christ does have the whole world in His hands. He is King. He has authority over all things. But He has come first in humility. The world looked at Him and laughed and jeered as they mocked, spat on, and crucified Him. "*If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross*" (Matthew 27:40). That's what our hands have done. By appearance alone, it didn't look like He had the whole world in His hands.

The hand of the Lord was in control the whole time. The whole world was in His hands as He was enacting salvation for the sake of the whole world. He has healed us through His suffering. He brought salvation through His crucifixion. He brought forgiveness through His death. He brought justification to us as He was raised on the third day. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now reigns. And one day, the whole world will know that He does, in fact, have the whole world in His hands.

Jesus' hand is still at work through His church today, baptising and teaching. Jesus' hand is at work when young and old alike have the promises of baptism poured out upon their heads. Jesus' hands are at work when His body and blood are delivered into our mouths to eat. Jesus' hands are at work when He opens the Scriptures to us to teach us the words of God. Our whole lives are in His hands.

This also means something for the use of our hands in this world. We certainly do not have ultimate control over this life. Yet, at the same time, the Lord uses our hands in our daily vocations at home, at work and in society, and in the church to love and serve our neighbours. Knowing that our eternal lives are in His hands gives us the freedom to reach out and deliver His many gifts to those in need.

Everything is in Jesus' hands. All of history is in His hands. Our lives are in His hands. Your future is in His hands. Your salvation is in His hands. He's got the whole world in His hands. Amen.

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

*Stand*

## **Prayer**

P Let us pray:

P 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**

*LSB, p. 162*

P Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us 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**

*LSB, p. 234*

P Let us bless the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## **Benediction**

*LSB, p. 234*

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C **Amen.**

## **Hymn 426**