

ASH WEDNESDAY ORDER OF SERVICE

(MID-WEEK LENTEN SERVICE 1, 2026)

THE GOOD NEWS OF A GOD WHO HEARS AND ANSWERS CRIES

God hears Israel's cry for deliverance. Sinful humans forget the promises they make, but God never forgets. He does not forget Israel but remembers His covenant with their fathers. In Holy Communion, we remember God's new covenant in Christ. Holy Communion is God's promise of forgiveness to us and assures us that He will never forget us.

May the Lord bless our worship tonight



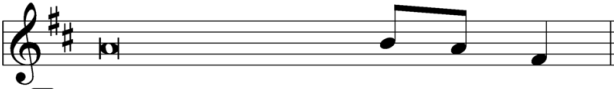
VESPERS

As the minister approaches the altar the congregation stands

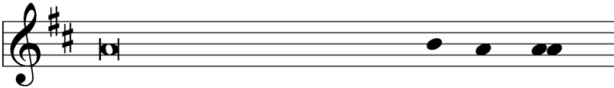
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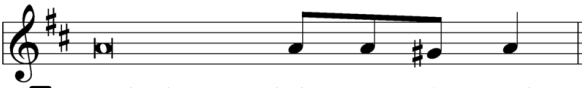
P O Lord, o - pen my lips,



C and my mouth will de - clare Your praise.



P Make haste, O God, to de - liv - er me;



C make haste to help me, O Lord.

PSALM

Psalm 51:1-4, 10-12

P Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love;

C according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

P Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

C For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

P Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight,

C so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment.

P Create in me a clean heart, O God,

C and renew a right spirit within me.

P Cast me not away from Your presence,

C and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.

P Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,

C and uphold me with a willing spirit.

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.

Sit

HYMN 947

FIRST READING

Joel 2:12–19

P The First Reading is from Joel, the second chapter.

¹²“Yet even now,” declares the LORD,
“return to Me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³and rend your hearts and not your garments.”

Return to the LORD, your God,
for He is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
and He relents over disaster.

¹⁴Who knows whether He will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind Him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the LORD your God?

¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion;
consecrate a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
¹⁶gather the people.

Consecrate the congregation;
assemble the elders;
gather the children,
even nursing infants.

Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her chamber.

¹⁷Between the vestibule and the altar

let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep
and say, “Spare Your people, O LORD,
and make not Your heritage a reproach,
a byword among the nations.

Why should they say among the peoples,
“Where is their God?””

¹⁸Then the LORD became jealous for His land
and had pity on His people.

¹⁹The LORD answered and said to His people,
“Behold, I am sending to you
grain, wine, and oil,
and you will be satisfied;
and I shall no more make you
a reproach among the nations.”

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING

2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10

P The Second Reading is from Second Corinthians, the fifth and sixth chapters.

^{20b} We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

^{6:1} Working together with Him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. ³ We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴ but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ⁷ by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ through honor and

dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST DRAWN FROM THE FOUR GOSPELS

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, also called the Passover, drew near, and Jesus said to His disciples: “You know that after two days is the Feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man will be given over to be crucified.”

Then the chief priests and scribes assembled with the elders of the people in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted how they might take Jesus craftily and put Him to death. But they said, “Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people,” for they feared the people.

Then Satan entered into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, one of the Twelve. He went his way to the chief priests and captains and spoke together with them how he might betray Jesus to them. They were glad to hear him. He said to them, “What will you give me to betray Him to you?”

They promised to give him money and agreed with him for thirty pieces of silver. He accepted, and from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him in the absence of the multitude.

Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread when they sacrificed the Passover lamb. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover, that we may eat it.”

They said to Him, “Where do You want us to prepare it?”

He said to them, “Go into the city and, when you have entered the city, watch for a man bearing a pitcher of water. When he meets you, follow him into the house where he enters. You shall say to the man who lives there, ‘The Master says to you, “My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house. Where

is the room for Me to eat the Passover with My disciples?” And he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.”

The disciples did as Jesus had directed them. They came into the city and found it as He had told them; and they made ready the Passover.

When the hour was come, Jesus sat down and the apostles with Him. As they were eating, He said, “I have longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I say to you I shall not eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, “Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.”

In the same way also He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

“Truly I say to you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of My Father.”

There was also a strife among them as to which of them should be accounted the greatest. He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ It shall not be so among you. He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serves. For who is greater, he that sits at the table or he that serves? Is it not he that sits at the table? But I am among you as a servant. You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations. I appoint you to a kingdom, as My Father has appointed Me. You shall eat and drink at My table in My kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

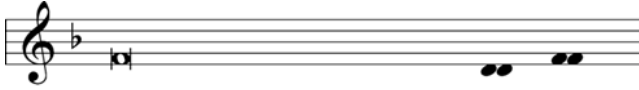
After the Narrative:

P Here ends the reading.

Stand

P Deliver me, O Lord, my God, for You are the God of my salvation.

C **Rescue me from my enemies, protect me from those who rise against me.**



P Let my prayer rise before You as in - cense,



C and the lifting up of my hands as the eve - ning sac - ri - fice.

The Word That Spoke in Darkness

Lisa M. Clark

Mark Knickelbein



- 1 The Word that spoke in dark - ness And prom - ised com - ing light
- 2 The Sav - ior came to con - quer And meet His mis - sion's aim:
- 3 The Christ pro - claimed His vic - t'ry With ev - 'ry act of grace:
- 4 The Prince of Peace con - tin - ued With each new task com - plete



Kept guid - ing through the a - ges Un - til the time was right
Up - end - ing Sa - tan's ter - ror, Cre - a - tion to re - claim
The out - cast shown com - pas - sion And God's own ho - ly face
At cross and tomb and glo - ry Up - on His roy - al seat,



To take on flesh and fol - low The Fa - ther's good com - mand
By walk - ing on the wa - ters So we by faith may stand
As Jes - sus looked with fa - vor On all from ev - 'ry land
De - liv - er - ance ac - com - plished Ex - act - ly as He planned;



And dwell a - mong His peo - ple, The king - dom now at hand.
With trust in Him whose res - cue Is of - fered by His hand.
Who need - ed life and heal - ing From His al - might - y hand.
Our King will raise in wel - come His pierced and ris - en hand.

SERMON The Good News of a God who Hears and Answers Cries

Exodus 2:23-25

The text for our sermon tonight is Exodus 2:23-25:²³ **During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.** ²⁴ **And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.** ²⁵ **God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.**

Dear friends in Christ,

The people of Israel were on their knees. Years of slavery and back-breaking labour in Egypt had worn them down. An order from the Pharaoh that any infant son they bore was to be killed¹ had laid them low. Now, even though “**the king of Egypt died,**” still “**The people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help.**” The change in rulers did nothing to change Israel’s slavery.

And those cries did not simply dissipate into the desert air. Like all the prayers of the faithful, they rose like incense to the throne of God. He was attentive to their cry for mercy. “**Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning.**” God understood what Israel felt and decided to take direct action on behalf of His people. Much like a caring mother or father when they hear the cry of their young child, God does not turn a deaf ear to the cries of His children. He hears, He cares, and He can be trusted to act in the best interests of His children. So, when He heard the people of Israel calling out to Him, He responded as their dear Father. “**God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.**” God decided the time had come for Him to act on the covenant promises He had made.

A covenant is a binding promise, and six centuries before Israel’s misery in our text, God had bound Himself to Abraham with some truly remarkable promises. Abraham and his wife, Sarah, you may recall, were very old and childless, but God had promised them descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. He also promised a land for his offspring to possess. And, most importantly, the promise that, ultimately, through him, all nations would be blessed. That blessing to all nations would come through one particular Offspring (or Seed) of Abraham: *the promised Saviour*.

God had made those great promises to Abraham and then repeated them to Abraham’s son, Isaac, and to Isaac’s son, Jacob. At the time of the events in our reading, though, more than four hundred years had passed since the time of Jacob—and while Abraham’s descendants had indeed grown too numerous to count, if you had tried counting them,

¹ Exodus 1:15

you would have been counting *slaves*, not citizens, who were living in a foreign land, not a homeland. Now, the time had come for God to put into motion the next step in His plan for fulfilling all His promises. **“God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.”**

God saw His people and knew what they were going through. He knew the time had come for their deliverance. Most importantly, He knew the time had come for the next step in His plan of salvation, which would ultimately bring deliverance for people of all nations.

In the coming weeks, we’ll be hearing more about how God set about fulfilling His promises. But already, when we hear that God remembered His covenant, we know we can put a check mark next to His promises as fulfilled—because our God always keeps His promises.

Much like the Israelites in Egypt, we fall on our knees before the Lord here tonight.

The disappointments, pains, and pressures of life in a fallen world can be tiring. The struggle with sin can be wearying. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy, he warned him that there would be those who were puffed up with conceit and who understood nothing. There would be those who have an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words. What is the result? Envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction.² Perhaps you have seen this kind of behaviour or even engaged in it yourself. Then there are times when everything seems to be going from bad to worse, and even after your constant praying, you begin to ask, *“Where are You, God?”* True, we might not face the same kind of slavery the Israelites did, but the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature certainly do their best to enrol us in their service. We might not be bound in Egypt, but is it really any better to feel like we can’t escape the control of things like pride, impatience, impure thoughts, a love of possessions, or a need for people’s approval?

So, like our fathers and mothers in the faith, out of the depths we cry to the Lord. Even when we don’t know how to put our pleas into words, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, carrying our wordless sighs and groans to the Father³, who hears and understands.

The Lord hears your groaning; His ears are attentive to your cries for mercy. Every word you pray here. Every word you pray in your car on the way home or in your bed tonight. Every word you’ve said to your Father in heaven from childhood to this day. God hears and cares about every word—and the wordless sighs too.

He hears, He cares, He understands—and He remembers. He remembers your needs—and, even more importantly, He remembers the promises He has made to you.

For the God who made great promises to Abraham has made exceedingly great

² 1 Timothy 4:4-6

³ Romans 8:26

promises to you. And the God who kept His promises to Abraham can most certainly be trusted to keep His promises *to you also*.

The Lord had promised Abraham that He would have numerous descendants who would be given a home, and that through one particular Offspring, all nations would be blessed. God fulfilled all those covenant promises to Abraham. And in fulfilling the greatest of those promises, the promise of a Saviour, He also established a new covenant—a covenant *with you*.

In the Old Testament, God spoke through the prophets of a day to come when He would establish a new covenant with His people. The chief blessing of that covenant was summarised in these words spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: “*I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*” (Jer. 31:34).

That is God’s gracious covenant with you and with all who share the faith of Abraham—that is, all who share Abraham’s faith in the promised Seed who, in the fullness of time, did indeed come from Abraham’s line.

Jesus Christ came in fulfilment of God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He came in fulfilment of the promise to bring blessings to all nations. He came to bless you. He came to grant you the forgiveness of all your sins and everlasting life in the promised land of His kingdom.

In His steadfast love and mercy, Christ took your sins upon Himself, bore them to the cross, and there made full atonement for them. With King David, we ask, “*Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!*” (Psalm 51:1-2). And in exchange for your sin, He covers you in His righteousness. “*In Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them,... For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Cor. 5:19, 21). God remembers our sin no more.

When we hear in the Bible about God remembering, that means He has decided to *act on His memory*. So when God says He remembers your sins no more, it means *He has determined not to act on them*. Specifically, ***He has determined not to judge you for your sins***. Your sins have already been fully dealt with on the cross of Calvary, where Christ took the judgment for your sins upon Himself. Your forgiveness has been sealed in Jesus’ blood—the blood of the new covenant, poured out for you. So you can be sure that God *will remember to remember* your sins no more.

We heard earlier from Moses that “**God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.**” God sees you, His people today—and God knows. He knows what you have gone through and are going through. He knows your struggles. He knows your sin. But He knows that your sins are fully atoned for—for in Christ, you are forgiven and set free.

And because your sins have been atoned for, no longer separating you from Him, He answers your needs in all those struggles.

If God the Father were keeping a record of our sins, who could hope to stand before Him? But with Him, on account of Christ, there is forgiveness⁴, for He has heard your cries and has answered them in Christ Jesus.

May His name be honoured and praised forevermore, for with Him, steadfast love and full redemption are yours—and just as He promised, *He remembers your sin no more*. Amen.

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

HYMN 607

Stand

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

LSB 233



P The Lord be with you.



C And with your spir - it.

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.**

LORD'S PRAYER

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;**

⁴ Psalm 130:3-4a

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 234



P Let us bless the Lord.



C Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTION

LSB 234



P The grace of our Lord Je - sus Christ and the love of God



and the communion of the Holy Spir - it be with you all.



C A - men.

Sit

HYMN 857