



“I AM”

**Midweek Lent Series
using Evening
Prayer**

St. John's Lutheran Church

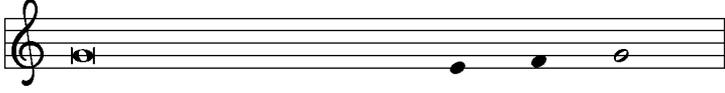
DIALOG



Behold, now is the accept - a - ble time; **now is the day of sal - vation.**



Turn us again, O God of our sal - vation,



that the light of your face may shine on us.



May your justice shine like the sun; **and may the poor be lift - ed up.**

HYMN OF LIGHT



1. All praise to You, my God, this night, For all the bles - sings of the light.
2. For - give me, Lord, for this I pray, The wrong that I have done this day.
3. Lord, may I be at rest in You And sweet - ly sleep the whole night thro'.
4. Praise God, from whom all bles - sings flow; Praise Him all crea - tures here be - low;

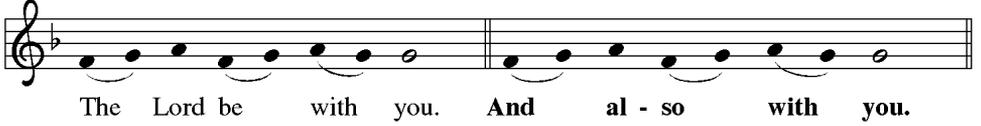


Keep me, O keep me, King of kings, Be - neath the shel - ter of Your wings.
May peace with God and neigh - bor be, Be - fore I sleep re - stored to me.
Re - fresh my strength, for Your own sake, So I may serve You when I wake.
Praise Him a - bove, ye heav'n - ly host; Praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.

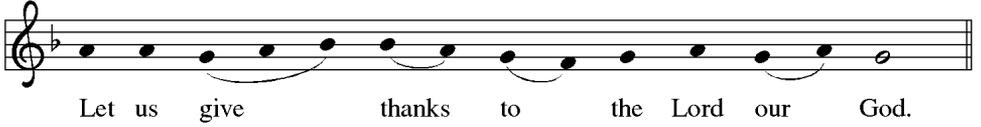


THANKSGIVING FOR LIGHT

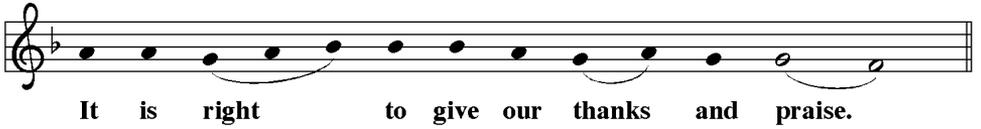
The leader and the assembly give thanks, using the following or another appropriate form.



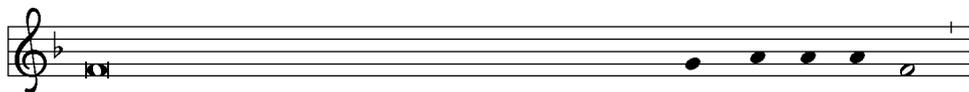
The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.



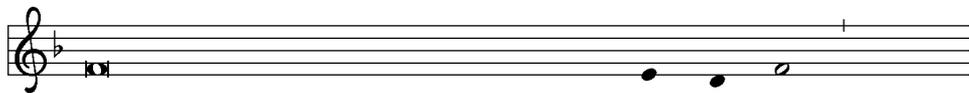
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



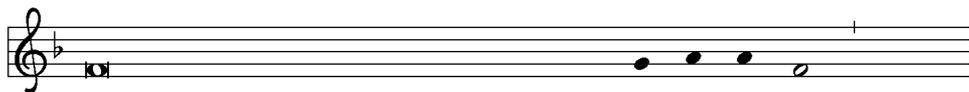
It is right to give our thanks and praise.



We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning you called light in - to being,



and you set lights in the sky to govern night and day.



In a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night



you led your peo - ple in - to freedom.



Enlighten our darkness by the light of your Christ; may your 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 with all your crea-tures we give you glory,



through your Son Je - sus Christ, in the unity of the Ho - ly Spirit,



now and for - ev - er. **A - men.**

EVENING PSALM

All



Let my prayer rise be - fore you as in - cense;



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

Group One or All



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

All



I cry to you. Let my prayer rise be - fore you as in - cense;



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

Group Two or All



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

Group One or All



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 -

Group Two or All



do - ers. But my eyes are turned to you, Lord God;

Overview of the Readings, Hymns, and Reflections

To find the appropriate readings, simply find the correct week. Following the hymn, the liturgy continues on page 21.

PSALM

Silence is kept after each psalm for meditation and prayer. A concluding prayer will be said following the silence.

Week of Lent 1: Psalm 130

Week of Lent 2: Psalm 126

Week of Lent 3: Psalm 121

Week of Lent 4: Psalm 23

Week of Lent 5: Psalm 24

READINGS

Week of Lent 1: John 6:35-40 - I AM the Bread of Life

Week of Lent 2: John 8:12-20 - I AM the Light of the World

Week of Lent 3: John 10:1-10 - I AM the Door

Week of Lent 4: John 10:11-18 - I AM the Good Shepherd

Week of Lent 5: John 11:17-27 - I AM the Resurrection and the Life

After the reading, the leader and congregation will respond by saying:

L The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

REFLECTIONS BY DR. KAROLINE LEWIS

HYMN

Week of Lent 1: Just As I am Without One Plea

Week of Lent 2: I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

Week of Lent 3: Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Week of Lent 4: The King of Love My Shepherd Is

Week of Lent 5: O Living Bread from Heaven

Week 1 - ELW Psalm 130

¹Out | of the depths

I cry to | you, O LORD;

²O LORD, | hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my | supplication.

³If you were to keep watch | over sins,

O LORD, | who could stand?

⁴Yet with you | is forgiveness,

in order that you | may be feared.

⁵I wait for you, O LORD; | my soul waits;

in your word | is my hope.

⁶My soul waits for the Lord more than those who keep watch | for the morning,

more than those who keep watch | for the morning.

⁷O Israel, wait for the LORD, for with the LORD there is | steadfast love;

with the LORD there is plen- | teous redemption.

⁸For the LORD shall | redeem Israel

from | all their sins.

Silence for meditation follows the reading of the psalm.

God of compassion, you sent your Word into the world to announce the dawn of salvation. Do not leave us in the depths of our sins, but give to us the fullness of your redeeming grace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen

John 6:35-40

Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.'

Reflection for Week 1

When Jesus says, “I AM the bread of life,” it is easy to limit this promise to our practices surrounding the Lord’s Supper. Certainly, this communal act is central to our Christian identity. But Jesus reminds us that the offer of himself is not just for us on a Sunday morning, but also so that we might provide life for others. Jesus as the bread of life is for the sake of eternal life for all, life that is both the assurance of life after death, but also life while living, here and now. When we believe that Jesus is the bread of life, we actively look for the people who need to be fed. Those whom the world drives away. Whom the world allows to go hungry. For whom abundant life (John 10:10) is almost impossible to comprehend. Jesus as the bread of life shapes the reality we can help create for the world God loves so much.

[Click here to listen to the Podcast Discussion for Week 1](#)

Just As I Am, without One Plea

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Just As I Am, without One Plea'. It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are printed below the vocal lines.

1 Just as I am, with - out one plea, but that thy blood was
2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - ya con - flict,
3 Just as I am, thou wilt re - ceive, wilt wel - come, par - don,
4 Just as I am; thy love un - known has bro - ken ev - 'ry

shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
man - ya doubt, fight - ings and fears with - in, with - out,
cleanse, re - lieve; be - cause thy prom - ise I be - lieve,
bar - rier down; now to be thine, yea, thine a - lone,

O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Week 2 - ELW Psalm 126

¹When the LORD restored the for- | tunes of Zion,
then were we like | those who dream.

²Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with | shouts
of joy.

Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great |
things for them.”

³The LORD has done great | things for us,
and we are | glad indeed.

⁴Restore our for- | tunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses | of the Negeb.

⁵Those who | sowed with tears
will reap with | songs of joy.

⁶Those who go out weeping, carry- | ing the seed,
will come again with joy, shoulder- | ing their sheaves.

Silence for meditation follows the reading of the psalm.

Faithful God, like a grain of wheat falling into the earth your Son went into death, so that after three days the earth might bloom with the joy of his rising. Let the seeds of justice, which we plant with tears, bring forth the power of the resurrection in the places of death and despair, and gather us at last into the joyful harvest of the saints; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

John 8:12-20

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’ Then the Pharisees said to him, ‘You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is not valid.’ Jesus answered, ‘Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid because I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgement is valid; for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid. I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf.’ Then they said to him, ‘Where is your Father?’ Jesus answered, ‘You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.’ He spoke these words while he was teaching in the treasury of the temple, but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

Reflection for Week 2

Readers of John's Gospel know Jesus is the light of the world since way back in the opening chapter, but it is only here, in John 8, that Jesus states it so clearly. Yet, he does not say it to the disciples first. That revelation happens later in the story of the healing of the man born blind. No, "I AM the light of the world" is first for those who question it and condemn it. It is first for those who refuse it and reject it. It is first for those who, even if they don't know it, need to hear it the most. It's easy to testify to the true light that shines in the darkness to willing listeners. It's far more difficult to give witness to Jesus as the light of the world when you are certain your witness will be rebuked and, in the end, rejected. We are to be the light of the world in the world — this is our reality now. Light that exposes people and systems and institutions that have used darkness to hide what they don't want to be seen. It is light that shines in the lives of those who have known only darkness.

[Click here to Listen to the Discussion Podcast for Week 2](#)

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say



1 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "Come un - to me and rest;
2 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "Be - hold, I free - ly give
3 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "I am this dark world's light;



lay down, O wea - ry one, lay down your head up - on my breast."
the liv - ing wa - ter, thirst - y one; stoop down and drink and live."
look un - to me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be bright."



I came to Je - sus as I was, so wea - ry, worn, and sad;
I came to Je - sus, and I drank of that life - giv - ing stream;
I looked to Je - sus, and I found in him my star, my sun;



I found in him a rest - ing - place, and he has made me glad.
my thirst was quenched, my soul re - vived, and now I live in him.
and in that light of life I'll walk till trav - ling days are done.

Week 3 - ELW Psalm 121

- ¹I lift up my eyes | to the hills;
from where is my | help to come?
- ²My help comes | from the LORD,
the maker of heav- | en and earth.
- ³The LORD will not let your | foot be moved
nor will the one who watches over you | fall asleep.
- ⁴Behold, the keep- | er of Israel
will neither slum- | ber nor sleep;
- ⁵the LORD watches | over you;
the LORD is your shade at | your right hand;
- ⁶the sun will not strike | you by day,
nor the | moon by night.
- ⁷The LORD will preserve you | from all evil
and will | keep your life.
- ⁸The LORD will watch over your going out and your | coming in,
from this time forth for- | evermore.

Silence for meditation follows the reading of the psalm.

O God, maker of heaven and earth, you help us in times of distress and watch over us day and night. Hold us securely in your mercy, that in the midst of fear and danger we may depend on you, our sure deliverer; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

John 10:1-10

‘Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Reflection for Week 3

Doors keep in and keep out. They make us feel safe, either by making sure no one gets in or by justifying our staying in. They are the border that insures separation from those who we suspect might harm us. This passage affirms that Jesus as the door is most certainly our security. But a careful reading suggests also that this is a rather permeable gate. The sheep are led out to pasture and they are brought back into the fold, safely into the arms of their shepherd. “I AM the door” is cause for us to imagine what kinds of access we choose to be — to keep out or to invite in. To provide protection for those in peril or shut out those who need shelter. Moreover, “I AM the door” shapes our reality, asking us to recognize and realize where and how and why we walk out of the fold (or not), leaving comfort and safeguard behind to be God’s love in the world.

[Click here to Listen to the Discussion Podcast for Week 3](#)

Savior, like A Shepherd Lead Us



1 Sav-ior like a shep-herd lead us; much we need your ten - der care.
 2 We are yours; in love be - friend us, be the guard-ian of our way;
 3 You have prom-ised to re - ceive us, poor and sin - ful though we be;
 4 Ear - ly let us seek your fa - vor, ear - ly let us do your will;



In your pleas-ant pas-tures feed us, for our use your fold pre-pare.
 keep your flock, from sin de - fend us, seek us when we go a - stray.
 you have mer - cy to re - lieve us, grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free.
 bless - ed Lord and on - ly Sav - ior, with your love our spir - its fill.



Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je - sus, you have bought us; we are yours.
 Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je - sus, hear us chil - dren when we pray.
 Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je - sus, ear - ly let us turn to you.
 Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je - sus, you have loved us, love us still.



Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je - sus, you have bought us; we are yours.
 Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, hear us chil - dren when we pray.
 Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, ear - ly let us turn to you.
 Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, you have loved us, love us still.



Week 4 - ELW Psalm 23

¹The LORD | is my shepherd;
I shall not | be in want.

²The LORD makes me lie down | in green pastures
and leads me be- | side still waters.

³You restore my | soul, O LORD,
and guide me along right pathways | for your name's sake.

⁴Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall | fear
no evil;

for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they | comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence | of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is | running over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days | of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the | LORD forever.

Silence for meditation follows the reading of the psalm.

Lord Jesus Christ, our good shepherd, you give us new birth in the waters of baptism, you anoint us with oil, and you nourish us at your table with heavenly food. In your goodness and mercy, dispel the shadows of evil and death, and lead us along safe paths, that we may rest securely in you and dwell in the house of the Lord now and forever, for your name's sake.

Amen.

John 10:11-18

‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.’

Reflection for Week 4

A beloved image of Jesus is much more than we ever imagined. Jesus with a lamb on his shoulders comforts us, makes us feel secure and safe. Jesus keeps the threats out. We follow Jesus because we know his voice and he calls us by name. But when we keep reading, we find out that Jesus as shepherd is not just a promise for us, but a promise for others. “I have other sheep that are not of this fold.” We’d like to hold on to Jesus as our shepherd, my shepherd, and ours alone. That is our reward, so to speak, for believing in Jesus. And yet Jesus as the good shepherd shapes our reality by asking us, just as he did with Peter (John 21:15-19), to be the shepherd now. The promise of other sheep to be invited into the fold, the promise of God loving the world, will come to fruition when we recognize Jesus as shepherd also names our identity. So we look for those sheep who have been outcast, rejected (John 9:34), to invite them into the community of Christ, to give them belonging when they have never had it or have been denied it.

[Click here to Listen to the Podcast Discussion for Week 4](#)

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

1 The King of love my shep - herd is, whose good - ness
 2 Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow, my ran - somed
 3 Per - verse and fool - ish oft I strayed, but yet in
 4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill, with thee, dear

fail - eth nev - er; I noth - ing lack if
 soul he lead - eth and, where the ver - dant
 love he sought me, and on his shoul - der
 Lord, be - side me, thy rod and staff my

I am his and he is mine for - ev - er.
 pas - tures grow, with food ce - les - tial feed - eth.
 gent - ly laid, and home, re - joic - ing, brought me.
 com - fort still; thy cross be - fore to guide me.

5 Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
 thine unction grace bestoweth;
 and, oh, what transport of delight
 from thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so, through all the length of days,
 thy goodness faileth never.
 Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
 within thy house forever.

Week 5 - ELW Psalm 24

- ¹The earth is the LORD's and all | that is in it,
the world and those who | dwell therein.
- ²For the LORD has founded it up- | on the seas
and established it up- | on the rivers.
- ³Who may ascend the mountain | of the LORD,
and who may stand in God's | holy place?
- ⁴Those of innocent hands and puri- | ty of heart,
who do not swear on God's being, nor do they pledge by | what is
false.
- ⁵They shall receive blessing | from the LORD
and righteousness from the God of | their salvation.
- ⁶Such is the generation of those who seek | you, O LORD,
of those who seek your face, O | God of Jacob.
- ⁷Lift up your heads, O gates; and be lifted up, O ever- | lasting doors,
that the King of glory | may come in.
- ⁸Who is this | King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, might- | y in battle!
- ⁹Lift up your heads, O gates; and be lifted up, O ever- | lasting doors,
that the King of glory | may come in.
- ¹⁰Who is this | King of glory?
Truly, the LORD of hosts is the | King of glory.

Silence for meditation follows the reading of the psalm.

God of all creation, open our hearts that Christ, the King of glory, may enter and rule our lives. Give us clean hands and pure hearts, that we may stand in your presence and receive your blessing through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

John 11:17-27

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who

believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.’

Reflection for Week 5

The raising of Lazarus makes two very important claims for our future — that Jesus will be raised, and so will we. This is good news, of course — a certainty of what happens after death that gives us hope and allows us to hope for those we love whom we lose. Death will not be the end. Jesus’ tomb, our tomb, will end up empty. But in all of that certainty about our future, we sometimes forget the ways in which the promise of resurrection impinges on our present. This is what Jesus needed Martha to see, and what he needs us to see — Jesus is the resurrection AND the life. Jesus needs us to see that we can experience resurrected life here and now, and that shapes our reality here and now.

This means that we make sense of life through the lens of resurrection. It means we give witness to rebirth and recreation when all there seems to be is death all around. Witnessing resurrection on a daily basis is what makes it possible to view the places and spaces where death seems to have taken hold, where empire appears to be the only power, and where suspicion and intolerance look to have won the day. This is where we must give witness to the truth we know.

[Click here to Listen to the Podcast Discussion for Week 5](#)

O Living Bread from Heaven

1 O liv - ing Bread from heav - en, how well you feed your guest!
 2 My Sav - ior, you have led me with - in your ho - liest place,
 3 You gave me all I want - ed; this food can death de - stroy.
 4 Oh, grant me then, well - strength - ened with heav'n - ly food, while here

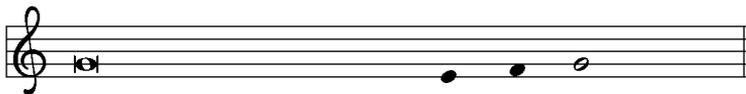
The gifts that you have giv - en have filled my heart with rest.
 and here your - self have fed me with trea - sures of your grace;
 And you have free - ly grant - ed the cup of end - less joy.
 my course on earth is length - ened, to serve you, free from fear;

O won - drous food of bless - ing! O cup that heals our woes!
 for you have free - ly giv - en what earth could nev - er buy,
 My Lord, I do not mer - it the fa - vor you have shown,
 and bring me home to praise you where none can peace de - stroy,

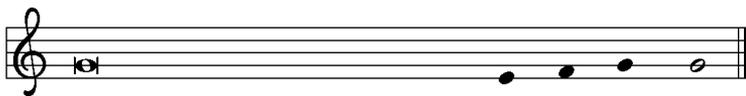
My heart, this gift pos - sess - ing, in thank - ful song o'er - flows!
 the bread of life from heav - en, that now I shall not die.
 and all my soul and spir - it bow down be - fore your throne.
 where I will ev - er raise you glad songs in end - less joy.

Text: Johann Rist, 1607-1667; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt.
 Music: AURELIA, Samuel S. Wesley, 1810-1876

After the song, the prayer continues with a scriptural dialogue. When it is sung, the following or a similar tone may be used, the assembly echoing the leader.



Jesus said, I am the light of the world.



Whoever follows me will never walk in dark - ness.

GOSPEL CANTICLE

1 My soul pro-claims your great-ness, Lord; I sing my Sav - ior's praise!
2 To all who live in ho - ly fear your mer - cy ev - er flows.
3 To Is - ra - el, your ser - vant blest, your help is ev - er sure;

You looked up - on my low - li - ness, and I am full of grace.
With might - y arm you dash the proud, their schem - ing hearts ex - pose.
the prom - ise to our par - ents made their chil - dren will se - cure.

Now ev - 'ry land and ev - 'ry age this bless - ing shall pro - claim—
The ruth - less you have cast a - side, the low - ly throned in - stead;
Sing glo - ry to the Ho - ly One, give hon - or to the Word,

great won - ders you have done for me, and ho - ly is your name.
the hun - gry filled with all good things, the rich sent off un - fed.
and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all a - dored.

PRAYERS

The image shows a musical score for a prayer. It consists of three staves: a vocal line (treble clef), a piano accompaniment line (treble clef), and a bass line (bass clef). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The vocal line begins with a whole note G4, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The piano accompaniment has a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a half note chord of G4 and B4, and a half note chord of A4 and C5. The bass line has a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a half note chord of G3 and B3, and a half note chord of A3 and C4. The lyrics are: "In peace, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy."

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us | pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mercy.

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.
Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us | pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mercy.

For the health of the creation, for abundant harvests that all may share, and for peaceful times, let us | pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mercy.

For public servants, the government, and those who protect us; for those who work to bring peace, justice, healing, and protection in this and every place, let us | pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mercy.

For those who travel, for those who are sick and suffering, and for those who are in captivity, let us | pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mercy.

For deliverance in the time of affliction, wrath, danger, and need, let us | pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mercy.

For Elizabeth and Matthew and all servants of the church, for this assembly, and for all people who await from the Lord great and abundant mercy, let us | pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

A time of silence follows.

Giving thanks for all who have gone before us and are at rest, rejoicing in the communion of *name/s and* all the saints, we commend ourselves, one another, and our whole life to you,

through Christ our Lord. To you, O Lord.

Silence for prayer follows. The litany with the following prayer chanted by the pastor.

LUTHER'S EVENING PRAYER

We give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have graciously protected us today. We ask you to forgive us all our sins, where we have done wrong, and graciously to protect us tonight. Into your hands we commend ourselves: our bodies, our souls, and all that is ours. Let your holy angels be with us, so that the wicked foe may have no power over us.

Amen.

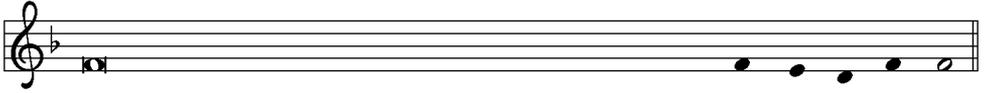
***LORD'S PRAYER**

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.

BLESSING

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.

The leader continues:



Almighty God, the Father, + the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and pre-serve us.



A - men.

May the spirit of our Lord be with us this night,
And with our absent brothers and sisters in Christ.

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Overview of our Midweek Lent Series - “I Am”

Our Lenten Series this year focuses on the “I AM” statements in the Gospel of John for the sake of intentional reflection on and proclamation of God becoming flesh. It was developed by Karoline Lewis Professor and the Marbury E. Anderson Chair of Biblical Preaching at Luther Seminary In Saint Paul, Minnesota

Let me say that again — God becoming flesh. The cross is many things; but first, it is the death of God. Let that sink in.

The “I AM” statements are more than just a novelty of the Fourth Gospel — they reveal, in all fullness (John 1:16), the identity of Jesus. “Obviously,” you might be thinking.

But Lent is the season to remember one very important thing about what it means to be a Christian: that **when Jesus goes to the cross, there goes God.**

[Listen to overview podcast 588a on this series](#)

Jesus as this one-and-only God, this unique God (John 1:18) is the distinctive claim of Christianity. Yet in today’s world what’s said and believed about Jesus has the tendency to divide Jesus’ humanity from Jesus’ divinity. Our Christologies seem comfortable with choosing one or the other, depending on whom we need Jesus to be in a certain time or place — or, for a certain purpose.

The Gospel of John reminds us — which, during Lent, is an especially important thing to remember — that to believe in Jesus is to hold the **fullness of Jesus’ humanity and Jesus’ divinity together.**

“What difference does this make?” you might be asking. Well, when we collapse Jesus’ humanity into Jesus’ divinity, it gets harder to imagine the purpose and pathos of the cross. After all, if that was God nailed to a tree, to what extent was that true suffering? And when we minimize Jesus’ divinity, it becomes easy to reduce Jesus to an above-average teacher, miracle worker, and advocate for the poor.

The challenge of Lent is to **negotiate these simultaneous truths** — and how to admit our own truth regarding *which* Jesus we prefer. Otherwise, all too often, Jesus ends up being trotted out and used to justify moral claims as if God were not a part of the picture.

A word about grammar may be useful here. The “I AM” statements in John are of two varieties: the absolute “I AM” statements in which there

is no qualifier, and the “I AM” statements with a predicate nominative.¹ And yet the point of both is to hold both together. Each time Jesus says, “I AM,” the entirety of the “I AM” statements stands behind this revelation. And every time Jesus says, “I AM the bread of life, I AM the light of the world,” the fullness of the absolute “I AM” statements stands behind this claim. When we keep this in mind, we begin to see that if we try to separate God and the Word made flesh, we have likely missed the point of Christianity altogether.

Consider the following quotation, circulating on Pinterest boards and throughout social media: “I AM. Two of the most powerful words; for what you put after them shapes your reality.”

This Lenten series helps us imagine that what Jesus puts after “I AM” in the Gospel of John shapes *our* reality.