

Bethlehem Lutheran Church



Holy Week at Home Resources
April 2020

Dear Family and Friends of Bethlehem Lutheran Church,

Holy Week this year is an unprecedented event – unable to gather for worship in person, we, and Christians all over the world have to figure out how to celebrate our holiest days without the rituals and traditions that have defined them for so long. Yet, there have always been moments in Christian history when worship was dangerous, unavailable, or barred, so throughout history there have been times, including in the early days of the church, when Christians have had to worship at home.

This year we are embracing the idea of Holy Week at Home, and the materials in this packet consist of devotions, services, and prayers that I encourage you to make time for at home this Holy Week. Whatever your living situation, and whoever you live with, following these suggestions will make it possible for us to observe Holy Week together, even as we are physically distanced from one another. Also, throughout the week, stay current with news, pictures, and prayers at www.facebook.com/BethlehemNOLA.

One of my suggestions for this week is to set up a home altar. Pick a peaceful location in your home and design your own “altar.” Make it a place you’ll be comfortable coming to each day to read, pray, and reflect. Things you might want to include are: fabric, a candle, a cross, a piece of art, a vase with fresh greens from your garden. If you have children, involve them in designing it. As the week progresses, you may want to add or swap new elements as inspiration strikes. Importantly, make a deal with yourself to turn off your technology/TV/phones when you are making time to be present for God in this space.

This packet begins with devotions for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. It then contains services and activities for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. On Easter, following recommendations from our Bishop, are instructions for how to celebrate communion at home. At the back are activities for children! While the coronavirus is disrupting just about every aspect of our lives, I hope you will take the opportunity to make these beautiful stories of Jesus part of a sacred week of reflection and celebration.

While Easter is our biggest festival of joy, we are celebrating it now in a time of difficulty and world-wide sorrow. Still, we believe that Christ is with us, present through God’s word, and drawing us together as one before God. And we believe that the gospel of Christ gives us strength and comfort in the face of our sufferings.

Blessings on you this Holy Week, and may we all be able to gather again soon!

Pastor Ben Groth

Devotions: Monday – Wednesday

For the first three days of Holy Week, we have assembled suggested scripture readings and meditations. We encourage you to set time aside each day at your home “altar” to read, pray and reflect. If you share your household with others, you may set time aside to do this together.

Devotion for Monday of Holy Week

A Reading from Scripture - John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

A Meditation

Where charity and love are found, there is God.
The love of Christ has gathered us together into one.
Let us rejoice and be glad in him.
Let us fear and love the living God,
and love each other from the depths of our heart.
Therefore when we are together,
let us take heed not to be divided in mind.
Let there be an end to bitterness and quarrels,
an end to strife,
and in our midst be Christ our God.
And, in company with the blessed,
may we see your face in glory, Christ our God,
pure and unbounded joy for ever and ever.
-from antiphons for the procession of gifts for the poor.

Devotion for Tuesday of Holy Week

A Reading from Scripture - John 12:20-36

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say-- `Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.

A Meditation

It is immensely easier to suffer in obedience to a human command than to suffer in the freedom of one's own responsible deed. It is immensely easier to suffer with others than to suffer alone. It is immensely easier to suffer openly and honorably than apart and in shame. It is immensely easier to suffer through commitment of the physical life than in the spirit. Christ suffered in freedom, alone, apart and in shame, in body and spirit, and since then many Christians have so suffered with him.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Devotion for Wednesday of Holy Week

A Reading from Scripture - *John 13:21-32*

At supper with his friends, Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples-- the one whom Jesus loved-- was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "Do quickly what you are going to do." Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the festival"; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once."

A Meditation

If the world is sane, then Jesus is mad as a hatter and the Last Supper is the Mad Tea Party. The world says, Mind your own business, and Jesus says, There is no such thing as your own business. The world says, Follow the wisest course and be a success, and Jesus says, Follow me and be crucified. The world says, Drive carefully—the life you save may be your own—and Jesus says, Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. The world says, Law and order, and Jesus says, Love. The world says, Get and Jesus says, Give. In terms of the world's sanity, Jesus is crazy as a coot, and anybody who thinks he can follow him without being a little crazy too is laboring less under a cross than under a delusion.

- *Now and Then* - Frederick Buechner

MAUNDY THURSDAY

We now enter the “three days” (Latin: Triduum) of Christ’s passion. The name “Maundy” comes from the Latin, “Maundate” which means, “I command you.” It refers to the new commandment Jesus gave his disciples at the Last Supper, that they love one another – that love itself is the center and the grounding of God’s law and God’s intention for us. In addition to the new commandment, Maundy Thursday recalls two other significant themes: the Last Supper which set the precedent for the sacrament of Eucharist, and the foot washing, a ritual action that demonstrates the nature of servant love.

Set out a bowl of water and a clean towel. Sit with them before you and begin with these texts. First, remember God’s forgiveness:

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us
even when we were dead in sin,
and made us alive together with Christ.
By grace we have been saved.
Our sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ.
Almighty God strengthen us with power
through the Holy Spirit,
that Christ may live in our hearts through faith. **Amen.**

Then pray the prayer for this night:

Holy God, source of all love,
on the night of his betrayal,
Jesus gave us a new commandment,
to love one another as he loves us.
Write this commandment in our hearts,
and give us the will to serve others
as he was servant of all,
your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Then read this reading:

FIRST READING: Exodus 12:1–14

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ²This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell the whole

congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. ⁴If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. ⁷They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. ¹⁰You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Then pray this Psalm:

PSALM 116

¹I love the LORD, who has ^l heard my voice,
and listened to my ^l supplication,
²for the LORD has given ^l ear to me
whenever ^l I called.
¹²How shall I re- ^l pay the LORD
for all the good things God has ^l done for me?
¹³I will lift the cup ^l of salvation
and call on the name ^l of the LORD.
¹⁴I will fulfill my vows ^l to the LORD
in the presence of ^l all God's people.
¹⁵Precious in your ^l sight, O LORD,
is the death ^l of your servants.
¹⁶O LORD, truly I ^l am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of your handmaid; you have freed me ^l from my bonds.
¹⁷I will offer you the sacrifice ^l of thanksgiving
and call upon the name ^l of the LORD.
¹⁸I will fulfill my vows ^l to the LORD
in the presence of ^l all God's people,
¹⁹in the courts of ^l the LORD's house,

in the midst of you, ¹ O Jerusalem.

Then read the Gospel:

***GOSPEL: John 13:1–17, 31b–35**

The holy gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹²After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord — and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. ^{31b}"Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ**

At this point you may watch the sermon Bishop Mike Rinehart recorded for us by visiting:
<https://vimeo.com/402372483>

Having read these readings, think of this:

This word about the love of Jesus is always the beginning of any time. By remembering the Passover and the Last Supper and the footwashing, we are not trying to get back to an old time. In the face of the suffering and death with which the world is filled, our trying would not come to much. But God's word comes to us now. To our time. Even when we cannot meet for the holy supper together, this word comes to us: Jesus Christ is our forgiveness. In the power of the Spirit, Jesus has washed our feet and our lives, and turns us toward our neighbors.

Here you may wash your hands, using the water in the bowl, recalling Jesus washing his disciples' feet.

Then, please pray together:

United with Christians around the globe on this Maundy Thursday, let us pray for the church, the earth, our troubled world, and all in need, responding to each petition with the words **Hear Our Prayer**.

A brief silence.

Blessed are you, holy God, for the church. Gather all the baptized around your presence in the Word. Strengthen the body of your people even when we cannot assemble for worship. Grant Bishop Ortiz and all our clergy faithfulness and creativity for their ministry in this time, and accompany those preparing for baptism.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear Our Prayer**.

Blessed are you, bountiful God, for this good earth and for the flowering of springtime. Save dry lands from destructive droughts. Protect the waters from pollution. Allow in this time the planting of fields for food. Make us into care-givers of your plants and animals.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear Our Prayer**.

Blessed are you, sovereign God, for our nation. Inspire all people to live in peace and concord. Grant wisdom and courage to heads of state and to legislators as they face the coronavirus. Lead our elected officials to champion the cause of the needy.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear Our Prayer**.

Blessed are you, faithful God, for you accompany suffering humanity with love. Abide wherever the coronavirus has struck. Visit all who mourn their dead; all who have contracted the virus; those who are quarantined or stranded away from home; those who have lost their employment; those who fear the present and the future. Support physicians, nurses, and home health aides; medical researchers; and the World Health Organization.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear Our Prayer**.

Blessed are you, gracious God, for you care for the needy. We beg you to feed the hungry, protect the refugee, embrace the distressed, house the homeless, nurse the sick, and comfort

the dying. Especially we pray for Karen Huff, Barb Jensen, Nathan Linman, Jack Mulloy, and for those we name before you now.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear Our Prayer.**

Blessed are you, loving God, that your Son knelt before us, your unworthy servants. Preserve our lives, comfort our anxiety, and receive now the petitions of our hearts.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear Our Prayer.**

At the end, bring us with them into your everlasting glory.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear Our Prayer.**

Receive, merciful God, our prayers, for the sake of Jesus Christ, the host of our meal of life, who died and rose that we might live with you, now and forever.

Amen.

Finally, bless yourself or one another:

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✝ give you peace.

Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

This is the solemn day to reflect on Christ's passion: his arrest, his trial, his crucifixion, his death, and his burial.

Start with a moment of silence in your home worship space

Begin with this prayer.

Almighty God,
look with loving mercy on your family,
for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed,
and to be given over to the hands of sinners,
and to suffer death on the cross;
who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Then read the readings that follow.

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 52:13—53:12

¹³See, my servant shall prosper;

he shall be exalted and lifted up,
and shall be very high.

¹⁴Just as there were many who were astonished at him

— so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of mortals —

¹⁵so he shall startle many nations;

kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
for that which had not been told them they shall see,
and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

Who has believed what we have heard?

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

²For he grew up before him like a young plant,

and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³He was despised and rejected by others;

a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.

⁴Surely he has borne our infirmities

and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.

⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.

⁶All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

⁷He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

⁸By a perversion of justice he was taken away.
Who could have imagined his future?
For he was cut off from the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people.

⁹They made his grave with the wicked
and his tomb with the rich,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain.
When you make his life an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days;
through him the will of the LORD shall prosper.

¹¹Out of his anguish he shall see light;
he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.
The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.

¹²Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he poured out himself to death,
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Pray this Psalm:

PSALM 22

¹My God, my God, why have you for-^lsaken me?
 Why so far from saving me, so far from the words ^l of my
 groaning?

²My God, I cry out by day, but you ^l do not answer;
 by night, but I ^l find no rest.

³Yet you are the ^l Holy One,
 enthroned on the prais-^les of Israel.

⁴Our ancestors put their ^l trust in you,
 they trusted, and you ^l rescued them.

⁵They cried out to you and ^l were delivered;
 they trusted in you and were not ^l put to shame.

⁶But as for me, I am a worm ^l and not human,
 scorned by all and despised ^l by the people.

⁷All who see me laugh ^l me to scorn;
 they curl their lips; they ^l shake their heads.

⁸"Trust in the LORD; let the ^l LORD deliver;
 let God rescue him if God so de- ^l lights in him."

⁹Yet you are the one who drew me forth ^l from the womb,
 and kept me safe on my ^l mother's breast.

¹⁰I have been entrusted to you ever since ^l I was born;
 you were my God when I was still in my ^l mother's womb.

¹¹Be not far from me, for trou-^lble is near,
 and there is no ^l one to help.

¹²Many young bulls en- ^l circle me;
 strong bulls of Ba-^lshan surround me.

¹³They open wide their ^l jaws at me,
 like a slashing and ^l roaring lion.

¹⁴I am poured out like water; all my bones are ^l out of joint;
 my heart within my breast is ^l melting wax.

¹⁵My strength is dried up like a potsherd; my tongue sticks to the
 roof ^l of my mouth;
 and you have laid me in the ^l dust of death.

¹⁶Packs of dogs close me in, a band of evildoers ^l circles round me;
 they pierce my hands ^l and my feet.

¹⁷I can count ^l all my bones
 while they stare at ^l me and gloat.

¹⁸They divide my gar-^lments among them;
 for my clothing, ^l they cast lots.

¹⁹But you, O LORD, be not ^l far away;
 O my help, hasten ^l to my aid.

²⁰Deliver me ^l from the sword,
 my life from the power ^l of the dog.

²¹Save me from the ^l lion's mouth!
 From the horns of wild bulls you have ^l rescued me.

²²I will declare your name | to my people;
in the midst of the assembly | I will praise you.
²³You who fear the LORD, give praise! All you of Jacob's | line, give glory.
Stand in awe of the LORD, all you offspring of Israel.
²⁴For the LORD does not despise nor abhor the poor | in their
poverty; neither is the LORD's face hid- | den from them;
²⁵From you comes my praise in the | great assembly;
I will perform my vows in the sight of those who | fear the
LORD.

²⁶The poor shall eat | and be satisfied.
Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your
hearts | live forever!
²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn | to the LORD;
all the families of nations shall bow | before God.
²⁸For dominion belongs | to the LORD,
who rules o- | ver the nations.
²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow | down in worship;
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall
kneel be- | fore the LORD.
³⁰Their descendants shall | serve the LORD,
whom they shall proclaim to genera- | tions to come.
³¹They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people | yet unborn,
saying to them, "The | LORD has acted!"

Then read the Gospel.

GOSPEL John 18:1 - 19:42

The holy gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

1[Jesus] went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. 2Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. 3So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" 5They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. 6When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. 7Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." 9This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me." 10Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was

Malchus. 11 Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

12 So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. 13 First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.

14 Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

15 Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, 16 but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. 17 The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." 18 Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

19 Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. 20 Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. 21 Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said." 22 When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" 23 Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" 24 Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." 26 One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" 27 Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

28 Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. 29 So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" 30 They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." 31 Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." 32 (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" 35 Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." 37 Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." 38 Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him. 39 But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" 40 They shouted in reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a bandit.

19:1 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. 2 And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. 3 They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. 4 Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." 5 So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" 6 When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." 7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

8 Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. 9 He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" 11 Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." 12 From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

13 When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" 15 They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." 16 Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; 17 and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. 19 Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." 20 Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. 21 Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." 23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. 24 So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says,

"They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots."

25 And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

28After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." 29A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. 30When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

31Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. 32Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. 33But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. 35(He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) 36These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." 37And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

38After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. 39Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. 40They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. 41Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. 42And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ**

Having read these readings, you can watch the sermon that Bishop Sue Briner of the Southwestern Texas Synod recorded for us by visiting this link:

<https://vimeo.com/402393040>

You may also think of this:

Jesus Christ is a root out of dry ground. By his wounds we are healed. These paradoxes of Isaiah are echoed in the account in John about his death: he is arrested, yet when he speaks the soldiers fall down; he is tried, yet he is King and Son of God and The Man; he is thirsty and dying, yet he is the source of the Spirit and of water and blood to heal us; finally he is buried, but it is in a garden. All of this means to tell us that God shares our sorrow and need and death and yet transforms it to life and salvation and hope. More than just a root out of dry ground, his cross is the great tree of life in which we all may shelter. You may shelter there today. And all those things in all the world that we pray for today, God holds together in him.

Then pray

THE BIDDING PRAYER

keeping silence after each bid

Dear members of God's family:
we pray for the church throughout the world. . .
we pray for our bishop, our pastor, and all servants of the church. . .
we pray for those preparing for baptism. . .
we pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God. . .
we pray for those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. . .
we pray for those who do not believe in God. . .
we pray for God's creation. . .
we pray for those who serve in public office. . .
we pray for those in any need. . .
and we pray for all afflicted by the coronavirus. . .

Finally, we pray:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
And deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power,
And the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen.

Conclude with these words:

We adore you, O Jesus, and we bless you.
By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

EASTER

This is the day the Lord has made! Christ is risen, and through him all creation is made new! Indeed, “God shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34): Christ’s resurrection truly brings life to everyone. We sing hymns of praise, gather around sacred words, and proclaim God’s faithfulness, power, and love in the feast of holy communion. With the women at the tomb, we are astonished, elated, and grateful. We depart with joy to proclaim the good news of God’s endless love.

Gather in your home worship space! Make it look joyful and festive if you’re able! Prepare a bowl with water in it ahead of timeso that you can dip your fingers in it and make the sign of the cross on your forehead during the thanksgiving for baptism! If you’re doing this on your own, read all the lines yourself, if there are more than one of you, you can alternate or share the lines of the service. Finally, take a picture of your Easter Service in action and send it to Pastor Ben at 262-203-1315 or grothb@gmail.com!

In recognition of the extraordinary circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic, our Bishop has provided guidance to pastors and congregations which allow individuals and families to celebrate communion at home. So before you begin this service, please gather a loaf or piece of bread (any kind is fine) and wine/grape juice, or another drink that feels respectful.

Call to Worship

Allelujah! Jesus Christ is risen!

Jesus is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Rejoice and praise him!

Alleluia!

Jesus is risen to set us free!

Alleluia!

Let us sing and celebrate together!

Alleluia!

Hallelujah! Jesus Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Thanksgiving for Baptism

Ever-living God, author of creation,

we give you thanks for your gift of water that brings life and refreshes the earth. We bless and praise you, for by water and the Word we are cleansed from sin and receive everlasting life.

Join us again this day to the saving death of Christ; renew in us the living fountain of your grace; and raise us with Christ Jesus to live in newness of life; for you are merciful, and you love your whole creation, and with all your creatures we give you glory, through your Son Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen.

Almighty God, who gives us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit and forgives us all our sins, strengthen us in all goodness and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Make the sign of the cross on your foreheads!*

Amen.

Read the readings that follow.

FIRST READING: JEREMIAH 31: 1-6

¹At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

²Thus says the LORD:

The people who survived the sword
found grace in the wilderness;
when Israel sought for rest,

³the LORD appeared to him from far away.

I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

⁴Again I will build you, and you shall be built,
O virgin Israel!

Again you shall take your tambourines,
and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.

⁵Again you shall plant vineyards
on the mountains of Samaria;
the planters shall plant,
and shall enjoy the fruit.

⁶For there shall be a day when sentinels will call
in the hill country of Ephraim:
“Come, let us go up to Zion,
to the LORD our God.”

PSALM 118: 1-2, 14-24

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!

²Let Israel say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”

¹⁴The LORD is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

¹⁵There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:
“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly;

¹⁶ the right hand of the LORD is exalted;
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.”
¹⁷ I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.
¹⁸ The LORD has punished me severely,
but he did not give me over to death.
¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.
²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.
²¹ I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
²³ This is the LORD’s doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

SECOND READING: Colossians 3:1-4

¹If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, ³for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

GOSPEL READING: MATTHEW 28:1-10

The holy gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is

my message for you.”⁸ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ**

On Sunday morning, I will post my Easter Sermon on our facebook page www.facebook.com/BethlehemNOLA and at our website: www.blcnola.org

SONG – AMAZING GRACE

- 1 Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
 that saved a wretch like me!
 I once was lost, but now am found;
 was blind, but now I see.

- 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
 and grace my fears relieved;
 how precious did that grace appear
 the hour I first believed!

- 3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares
 I have already come;
 'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
 and grace will lead me home.

- 4 When we've been there ten thousand years,
 bright shining as the sun,
 we've no less days to sing God's praise
 than when we'd first begun.

Prayers

Let us pray.

A brief silence for prayer follows each petition.

Mighty God of mercy, we thank you for this resurrection dawn, bringing the glory of our risen Lord who makes every day new.

Especially we thank you—

for the sustaining goodness of your creation...

for the new creation in Christ and all gifts of healing and forgiveness...

for the gifts of relationship with others...

for the great promise God kept in the resurrection of Jesus...

for the renewal of our lives through your love

Other prayers may be added.

Merciful God of might, renew this weary world, heal the hurts of all your children, and bring about your peace for all in Christ Jesus, the living Lord.

Especially we pray—

for those who govern nations of the world...

for the people in countries ravaged by strife or warfare...

for all who work for peace and international harmony...

for all who strive to save the earth from carelessness and destruction...

for the church of Jesus Christ in every land...

Other prayers may be added.

Almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us in safety to this new Easter day. Preserve us with your mighty power, and fill our lives with Hallujahs that we may not fall into sin nor be overcome in adversity. In all we do, help us be joyful and grateful for this resurrection and the promise of love in our lives. through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

OFFERING

While we are being physically distanced, Bethlehem's ministry continues, both through our feeding programs, which are providing over 300 free meals a week, as well as our sermons, online services, and pastoral care. Just like many of you, our income has plummeted because we are no longer able to hold services together. If you can support our ministry please consider an online gift, you can give by visiting www.blcnola.org/donate!

Communion

In recognition of the extraordinary circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic, our Bishop has provided guidance to pastors and congregations which allow individuals and families to celebrate communion at home. To do so, please follow these instructions:

Gather a loaf or piece of bread (any kind is fine) and wine/grape juice, or another drink that feels respectful.

Say these words, taken from the Lutheran service for sharing communion with those who are homebound, and raise the bread and then the drink:

When our congregation last gathered, the pastor proclaimed the words of Jesus, saying, "In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Say the Lord's Prayer:

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.

At this time you may serve yourself communion, or if there are others present, serve one another. When finished, you can place the bread and drink back on your altar/table, and conclude the service.

PRAYER

Life-giving God,
you have fed us with your word,
and our hearts burn within us.
Through this meal you have opened us to your presence.
Now send us forth to share the gifts of Easter with all in need;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing:

May the One who brought forth Jesus from the dead
raise us to new life, fill us with hope,
and turn our mourning into dancing.
Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,
One God, mother of us all,
bless us now and forever.
Amen.