

Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020
Living Faith Lutheran Church
A Service of the Word

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God. All are encouraged to have a branch of palm or cedar, pussy willow or any fruiting or blooming tree which can be raised during the blessing of the branches and then waved during the processional hymn. Although we will not have a community procession during the "non-processional" hymn, we may consider standing. . .or even walking around if possible. . .during the reading (or singing) of the song. As well, if there is a cross or crucifix (a cross with a corpus or body fixed to it) on a wall of your home that can be removed, please consider bringing it out to the worship space and displaying it in a prominent place. Doing so will help reinforce the liturgical idea that Palm Sunday is also rightly called "Passion Sunday" since it is the first day of Holy Week.

ACCLAMATION

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. **Hosanna in the highest.**

PROCESSIONAL GOSPEL:

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

The Reading of the Gospel Matthew 21:1-11

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." ⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ⁵"Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" ¹¹The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

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

BLESSING OF THE BRANCHES

The Lord be with you/us. **And also with you/others.**

Let us pray. *A brief silence is kept. The branches are raised and the prayer spoken*

We praise you, O God, for redeeming the world through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Today he entered the holy city in triumph and was proclaimed messiah and king by those who spread garments and branches along his way. Bless these branches (+) and those everywhere who raise or carry them. Grant us grace to follow our Lord in the way of the cross, so that, joined to his death and resurrection, we enter into life with you; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

GATHERING SONG #344 "All Glory, laud and honor"
(The refrain is sung or spoken first)

Refrain

*All glory, laud, and honour to you, redeemer, king,
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.*

1. You are the king of Israel and David's royal Son.
now in the Lord's name coming, our King and Blessed One. *Refrain*
2. The company of angels are praising you on high;
creation and all mortals in chorus make reply. *Refrain.*
3. The multitude of pilgrims with palms before you went.
Our praise and prayer and anthems before you we present. *Refrain.*
4. To you, before your passion, they sang their hymns of praise.
To you, now high exalted, our melody we raise. *Refrain.*
5. Their praises you accepted; accept the prayers we bring,
great author of all goodness, O good and gracious king. *Refrain.*

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

As we now enter into the contemplation of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and meditate on the salvation of the world through his sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection, let us pray.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

God speaks to us now in scripture reading, preaching, and songs.

WORD

FIRST READING Isaiah 50:4-9a

⁴The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens — wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.
⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward. ⁶I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.
⁷The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
⁸he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me.
⁹It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING Philippians 2:5-11

⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
⁶who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,⁸he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Let your steadfast love come to us, O Lord.
Save us as you promised; we will trust your word.

GOSPEL:

The holy gospel according to Matthew 26:14-27:66

Glory to you, O Lord.

The gospel reading noted above is the entire passion story which would be read if we were gathered together. Along it is long, if possible, please read it in its entirety. Alternatively, you may read the shorter version from Matthew 27:11-54 (printed below) which is from "The Message"—a paraphrase by Dr. Eugene Peterson.

11 Jesus was placed before the governor, who questioned him: "Are you the 'King of the Jews'?" Jesus said, "If you say so." **12** But when the accusations rained down hot and heavy from the high priests and religious leaders, he said nothing. **13** Pilate asked him, "Do you hear that long list of accusations? Aren't you going to say something?" **14** Jesus kept silence – not a word from his mouth. The governor was impressed, really impressed.

15 It was an old custom during the Feast for the governor to pardon a single prisoner named by the crowd. **16** At the time, they had the infamous Jesus Barabbas in prison. **17** With the crowd before him, Pilate said, "Which prisoner do you want me to pardon: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus the so-called Christ?" **18** He knew it was through sheer spite that they had turned Jesus over to him.

19 While court was still in session, Pilate's wife sent him a message: "Don't get mixed up in judging this noble man. I've just been through a long and troubled night because of a dream about him."

20 Meanwhile, the high priests and religious leaders had talked the crowd into asking for the pardon of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus. **21** The governor asked, "Which of the two do you want me to pardon?" They said, "Barabbas!" **22** "Then what do I do with Jesus, the so-called Christ?" They all shouted, "Nail him to a cross!" **23** He objected, "But for what crime?" But they yelled all the louder, "Nail him to a cross!"

24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that a riot was imminent, he took a basin of water and washed his hands in full sight of the crowd, saying, "I'm washing my hands of responsibility for this man's death. From now on, it's in your hands. You're judge and jury." **25** The crowd answered, "We'll take the blame, we and our children after us." **26** Then he pardoned Barabbas. But he had Jesus whipped, and then handed over for crucifixion.

27 The soldiers assigned to the governor took Jesus into the governor's palace and got the entire brigade together for some fun. **28** They stripped him and dressed him in a red toga. **29** They plaited a crown from branches of a thorn bush and set it on his head. They put a stick in his right hand for a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mocking reverence: "Bravo, King of the Jews!" they said. "Bravo!" **30** Then they spit on him and hit him on the head with the stick.

31 When they had had their fun, they took off the toga and put his own clothes back on him. Then they proceeded out to the crucifixion. **32** Along the way they came on a man from Cyrene named Simon and made him carry Jesus' cross.

33 Arriving at Golgotha, the place they call "Skull Hill," **34** they offered him a mild painkiller (a mixture of wine and myrrh), but when he tasted it he wouldn't drink it.

35 After they had finished nailing him to the cross and were waiting for him to die, they whiled away the time by throwing dice for his clothes. 36 Then the soldiers sat down at the foot of the cross and kept watch over him.

37 Above his head they had posted the criminal charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 38 Along with him, they also crucified two criminals, one to his right, the other to his left. 39 People passing along the road jeered, shaking their heads in mock lament: 40 "You bragged that you could tear down the Temple and then rebuild it in three days – so show us your stuff! Save yourself! If you're really God's Son, come down from that cross!"

41 The high priests, along with the religion scholars and leaders, were right there mixing it up with the rest of them, having a great time poking fun at him: 42 "He saved others – he can't save himself! King of Israel, is he? Then let him get down from that cross. We'll all become believers then! 43 He was so sure of God – well, let him rescue his 'Son' now – if he wants him! He did claim to be God's Son, didn't he?" 44 Even the two criminals crucified next to him joined in the mockery.

45 From noon to three, the whole earth was dark. 46 Around mid-afternoon Jesus groaned out of the depths, crying loudly (*The Hebrew phrase is pronounced: Ay-lee, Ay-lee, llama sa-bach-thanee*), "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

47 Some bystanders who heard him said, "He's calling for Elijah." 48 One of them ran and got a sponge soaked in sour wine and lifted it on a stick so he could drink. 49 The others joked, "Don't be in such a hurry. Let's see if Elijah comes and saves him."

50 But Jesus, again crying out loudly, breathed his last.

(Please pause for a brief time of silence and reflection at the death of our Saviour. Again, if we were together in one place, it would be appropriate to rise for the reading of the remainder of the passion story)

51 At that moment, the Temple curtain was ripped in two, top to bottom. There was an earthquake, and rocks were split in pieces. 52 What's more, tombs were opened up, and many bodies of believers asleep in their graves were raised. 53 (After Jesus' resurrection, they left the tombs, entered the holy city, and appeared to many.) 54 The captain of the guard and those with him, when they saw the earthquake and everything else that was happening, were scared to death. They said, "This has to be the Son of God!"

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

SERMON

Palm Sunday, April 4, 2020

In last week's story of the raising of Lazarus, the central verse—and the core of the story--was found in Jesus' words to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life; everyone who believes in me will live. . ."

He then goes on to ask Martha the key question: "Do you believe this?" In other words, "Do you believe what I have said about me being the source and giver of new life? Do **you** believe that? Do you **believe** me? Do you believe **in** me?" And she replies with words of faith that set the tone for the remainder of the story: "Yes, Lord, I believe. . ."

"Believe" is a common word we hear and use in church all the time. In the Creeds it is either "I believe" or "We believe". "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." Even, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

The word "believe" comes from old German words meaning "to have trust in" or "to have faith in." So we can say that "to believe" means to "have faith in, to count on, to rely on or to depend on"—all of them variations of the word "trust".

And to trust something or someone doesn't involve requiring or demanding proof prior to trusting, but rather simply offers its acceptance. "I trust you. I trust that you are telling me the truth" or "I trust that you will do as you say."

In Greek, the root word from which we get our English word "faith" is a word that also means "firm persuasion, assurance, conviction, faithfulness."

Now, the point of this little word study is to say that, up until about the 17th century, to "believe" meant to "trust".

But in the 17th century, an intellectual and philosophical revolution took place in the way people looked at and thought about "truth" and "trust"—and that movement or revolution was called "The Enlightenment" or "The Age of Reason".

It was a movement that dominated Europe for the next 200 years while, at the same, brought an end to what we now call "the Dark Ages"—a time in which

Europe was characterized by ignorance, superstition, illiteracy, and absolute submission to the power and rule of the the medieval church.

The Age of the Enlightenment was marked by an emphasis on the scientific method known as as reductionism, and highlighted the sovereignty of reason and the evidence of the senses and of science as the primary sources of knowledge.

Now, a downstream effect of this emphasis on reason as the source of knowledge and truth was that, for the church, the notion of “belief” as trust or faith was redefined and reduced to a “belief system”—that is, to the acceptance of and commitment to certain doctrines and teachings--

even in the face of evidence or proof that undermined or invalidated those doctrines such as the Bible story which says that Joshua made the “sun stand still” which implied that the sun revolved around the earth—something the church continued to declare as true while Copernicus was proving that it was not.

Again, note what I am saying here: To have faith back then meant that one gave intellectual assent or verbal agreement to certain carefully-constructed formulas or statements of theological truths describing Jesus, that claimed to define or explain both him and his teachings. . .

which meant that knowledge “about” Jesus became more important than actually “knowing” Jesus; that information became more important than experience; and that the “head” became more trustworthy than the “heart.” And lost in all of this was the notion of belief as “trust”.

As Barbara Brown Taylor phrases it so beautifully and insightfully in her book **“Learning the Walk in the Dark”**: “For me,” she says “to ‘believe’ really means ‘to set the heart upon’ or ‘to give the heart to’ as in ‘I believe in love’.”

In that same book, she coins a term which neatly captures the exact opposite of “enlightenment”—the word “endarkenment”—which, for her, means learning to see and to trust in the dark—to see God in the dark. . .which is where God is. . . where God is found. . .and where we most need God to be found.

Now, the Scriptures tell us that “God is light”—which is, of course, true. But they also tell us that we cannot see God as light. . .or even look upon the face of God without being blinded by that light. . .because the divine light is too brilliant—

which is why Taylor has learned and concluded that the primary place for an intimate encounter with God is in the dark—whether we are talking about the darkness of night or darkness of depression or despair, disappointment or distress.

The Lutheran version of this way of seeing or understanding is called the “Theology of the cross”—which, in a nutshell, means that God is nearest to us when things look bleakest to us; that God is most present when God seems most absent; and in Luther’s words, that the face of God is seen most clearly in the face of Christ on the cross—in the face of one dying out of love for us. . .dying for the love of us.

So, if we want to see and find God, its not in the halls of power or under the bright lights of Broadway. . .in the press gallery at the White House or around the boardroom tables of corporate headquarters. . .nor in the glitz, glitter and glamour of movie or TV stars, or in massive malls, or on social media platforms that proclaim how wonderful and exciting and glorious other people’s lives are in comparison to our humdrum lives.

Instead, when we want to find and see God, we need to look in the dark places, the lowly places, the sorrowful places. . .among the broken and broken-hearted, where the poor and the forgotten and the marginalized live. . .in and among those Robert Farrar Capon calls “the little, the last, the least, and the lost”.

In other words, the presence of God is experienced, not so much in the good times as in the tough times; not as much in the light as in the dark. And so, as Taylor says, we need to learn to walk in the dark. . .to learn to trust and not fear the darkness. . .because that’s where God is. . .just waiting to meet us.

By now, you are probably wondering why I am talking about last week’s story and focusing on the words “believe in me” and “I am the resurrection and the life”. . . and then adding into that mix the whole business of the darkness in which God dwells and in which God is experienced... especially since today is Palm Sunday:

The day the church remembers Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem to the cheers of the people—cheers that, in a matter of days, will turn into jeers; the day when we normally read the whole Passion Story in which we are told that Jesus, this one in whom we find life. . .the one who has promised that in him is life—that, this Jesus gives up his life. . .and dies.

Well, if that confusing “melange” or “mix” of ideas is something you wondered about, then please hang in with me for a little bit longer and, hopefully, discover where all of this is leading-- and how and when and where new life is found—which is not just at Easter either, in the story of the resurrection.

Because, you see, before we get to Easter, we have to go through Good Friday. Before we find new life, the old one. . .our old life. . .has to die. . .to be lost. . .to be given up.

And, ironically, both Holy Week and the Covid 19 virus remind us clearly that the “old life”—the “old way of living”. . .the “old” normal. . .is dead and gone. . .that it is over and done with.

Oh, some things in our former way of living and thinking and behaving will remain and resume, but we, and the whole world with us, will never be quite same again.

Our pre-pandemic lives are dead. . .and that, my friends, is a good thing--because we cannot be made new. . .unless and until we die--and I’m not just referring to “end of life” dying either—but the death of our self--our self-centred false selves, that image or illusion we have so carefully constructed over the years to convince us that we are in control of our lives now and in the future.

So when Jesus says, “Those who want to save their lives will lose them and those who lose their lives for my sake will find them. . .”, he is talking about being changed totally—and I mean, totally—because his words speak of a transformation that is not intended to prop up, comfort or enhance the self but to dismantle it and bring it to an end.

Or, to slightly paraphrase the words of Ken Wilbur: In order to find and receive the new life Jesus promises us, the old self is not made content; but is made toast.”

Or let’s look at it another way. Last week we learned that Jesus is in the business of raising the dead, but, if we want to be raised from the dead and given a new life, then we have to have the good sense. . .and the wisdom and the willingness. . . to lie down and let the coffin lid fall on us and the dirt cover us.

In other words, before we can be raised to new life, we need to give up and let go of the old one.

And that is hard. . .and scary—much like life in our world today is hard and scary:

Not “hard” in the sense of difficult to handle or to cope with, because, I think, for most of us, “staying home” is more of an inconvenience or an annoyance. . .or even a breather and a blessing. . .than it is a great sacrifice or a time of trial and tribulation.

But it is scary—and not just the thought that we might be or get infected and get sick or even worse—but it is frightening to realize that the world we knew. . .the world we “used to live in” is gone; and that the sense of security we had—financial or otherwise—has also been rocked to its core and will never be quite the same again; and nor will we ever feel quite as safe again.

Now, I know from my experience, as you do most of you from yours, that it is hard to live in the middle of a transition: Moving from where and what we were to where we are going and to what we will be. It is hard in that “in-between” stage—where we *“ain’t what we used to be and we ain’t what we’re gonna be”*.

And that is why it is important for us to learn at least a few of the lessons we are being taught now in this time of uncertainty, this time of waiting and watching.

As well, there are also loads of lessons yet to be learned. . .and people much wiser than I will teach us and show us that staying at home and being bored is no longer going to be solved or fixed or made better by going shopping. . .or by “killing time” (what a terrible phrase that is these days) –“killing time” or just “wasting time” playing on the computer or slouched on the couch watching Netflix.

But the most important lesson of all to learn--and the one I do know something about—and am called to proclaim as clearly and resolutely as I can--is this one:

That the God who has been with us in the past, and who is with us now in the present, will be with us in the future—whatever that future looks like or however it shakes out. After all, that’s God’s name—Emmanuel—which means “God is with us.”

And now, getting back to the business of the new life that Jesus promises us: One way we find and receive new life right now is through the relationships that we have and miss so much these days—the friendships and caring we shared with and among each another in our particular communities of faith.

As well, we do and will find new life in the ties that bind us to all the others across the road and across the globe who are our sisters and brothers—our partners with us--in being the Body of Christ in this world.

And we will also find new life on that day when the voice of the one who called Lazarus by name and then raised him will call us by name and say “My child, come out! It is time to come home. . .and to stay home!”

Just as I am sure that Jesus began the last week of his journey on this earth with considerable anxiety and even some fear of what lay ahead, I am also sure that he trusted and placed his heart into the hands of God. . .gave his heart to God, believing that the last days of his last week would not be the last we would hear of him. . .and of God’s love for him. . .and God’s love and his for us.

In the same breath, though, I want to make it clear that I don’t think that Jesus just waltzed through this week, convinced that Calvary was nothing more than an unwelcome pit stop on his way to a short weekend in the grave. . .and that everything would be just fine very soon--that it would all be trumpets and lilies from then on out.

Because, he, more than any of us, knew the truth of what he told us and others: That one cannot save one’s own life but must first lose it; to be prepared to give it up before, and in order to, find and receive the gift of a new one.

So, let’s not jump ahead to Easter too soon—to the empty grave. Instead, let’s spend a little time each day this week preparing for Good Friday. . .and to remember that right now, we, too, are being asked the question Jesus put to Martha:

“Do **YOU** believe **this**? Do **YOU** believe **me**? Do **YOU** believe **IN** me?”

May it be so that, in faith and in the dark, we will reply with Martha’s words of trust on our lips and in our hearts—in the hearts we have given to him out of our love for him: “Yes, Lord, I believe.” “Yes, Lord, I trust you.” “I trust **in** you.”

And now, let us close with this prayer—one that is nearest and dearest to me:

“O God, you have called your servants
to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good courage,

not knowing where we go but only that your hand is leading us
and your loving supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

SDG Soli Deo Gloria

SONG OF THE DAY #343 “My Song is Love Unknown”

1. My song is love unknown, my Saviour’s love to me,
 love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be,
 Oh, whom am I, that for my sake my Lord should take frail flesh and die?
2. He came from his blest throne salvation to bestow;
 the world that was his own would not its Saviour know.
 But, oh, my friend, my friend indeed, who at my need his life did spend!
3. Sometimes we strew his way and his sweet praises sing;
 resounding all the day hosannas to our king.
 Then “Crucify!” is all our breath, and for his death we thirst and cry.
4. We cry out, we will have our dear Lord made away,
 a murderer to save, the prince of life to slay.
 Yet cheerful he to suff’ring goes that he his foes from thence might free.
5. In life no house, no home my Lord on earth might have;
 in death no friendly tomb but what a stranger gave.
 What may I say? Heav’n was his home but mine the tomb wherein he lay.
6. Here might I stay and sing—no story so divine!
 Never was love, dear King, never was grief like thine.
 This is my friend, in whose sweet praise I all my days could gladly spend.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY FOR OURSELVES AND FOR OTHERS

Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *A brief silence.*

God of mercy, awaken your church to new and clear proclamations of your faithfulness in times of fear and anxiety. By your Spirit, give us bold and joyful words to speak, that we sustain the weary and worried with the message of your redemptive presence and power. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, quiet the earth where it trembles and shakes. Protect vulnerable ecosystems, threatened habitats, and endangered species. Protect health care workers in hospitals and care homes, politicians, police and first responders who plan, carry out and enforce directives that help keep people safe. Bless the work of scientists, engineers, and researchers who seek to find vaccinations and other medical ways of healing those who are ill as well as those who explore ways to restore the creation to health and wholeness. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, drive away fear and anger that cause us to turn against or become suspicious of one another and thereby cause division, heartache and pain to the whole community. Give courage to leaders who seek liberation for the oppressed and comfort to those who are in distress. Bring peace to those who are in prison and hope to those in refugee camps or in places far from home, family and friends. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, send your saving help to all who suffer abuse, insult, discrimination, or contempt for any reason. Heal the wounded and heart-broken. Hold up those who are frightened at the prospect of dying. Bring peace to those suffering chronic or terminal illnesses who may not be able to find or receive medical treatment due to the overcrowding of emergency wards and the lack of hospital beds or ventilators. Tend to all who cry out for relief (*especially those whom we know and name now in silence or aloud. . .*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, we pray for all who will prepare and lead worship in this Holy Week—especially during this time when faith communities are compelled to suspend their gathering together. In all things, show us the ways that you call us to die to self, to live for you, and to give ourselves--and give of ourselves--for the sake of others. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, when we breathe our last, you promise to grant us to a new and eternal life. With all your witnesses in heaven and on earth (*especially Rick and Dave and Elias. . .and our loved ones whom we remember before you now. . .(Pause). . .*), let us boldly confess the name of Jesus Christ, our resurrection and our hope. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE

Those at this gathering of worshippers are invited to share the peace of the risen Christ either with others present or, in silence or aloud, with those they know and love. . .and miss

The peace of Christ be with us always.

OFFERING *All are invited to present themselves to God and to the service of God's people as their offering. That gift of ourselves may be shared in whatever way is possible or suitable, whether that is phoning others to enquire after their wellbeing, asking if there is anything we may do for someone to assist them during their stay at home, including, but not limited to praying for them. Offering to buy groceries or pick up medicines or books or puzzles (doing so, of course, while paying attention to physical distancing and, if desirable, wearing a mask or disposable gloves and avoiding the use of cash (which may carry the virus and put staff at risk). But please do not underestimate the value and importance of simply staying in touch with those in our parish whom we miss being with or those family or friends who may feel isolated or alone and would appreciate hearing a human voice and the expression of human warmth and care.*

THANKSGIVING

A PRAYER IN TIME OF ANXIETY OR FEAR

Almighty and merciful God, you are the only source of health and healing; you alone can bring calmness and peace. Grant to us, your children, an awareness of your presence and a strong confidence in you. In our pain, our weariness, and our anxiety, surround us with your care, protect us by your loving might, and permit us once more to enjoy health and strength and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

A PRAYER OF THOMAS MERTON *(a monk and a mystic who met God in the dark
and learned to believe, to trust, and to wait)*

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me
and I cannot know for certain where it will all end.

Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you does, in fact, please you.

And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do or be anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore, I will trust always though I may seem to be lost
and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

A PRAYER OF TRUST *Consider memorizing this short prayer and to pray it often,
especially in these times of anxiety and uncertainty*

O God, you have called your servants
to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good courage,
not knowing where we go
but only that your hand is leading us
and your love supporting us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(From Luke 11:1-4)*

Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive
everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial.

SENDING

THE BLESSING (BENEDICTION)

May God bless us and direct our days and our deeds in peace. Amen.

SENDING SONG #346 "Ride On, Ride On in Majesty"

- 1. Ride on, ride on in majesty! Hear all the tribes hosanna cry;
 O Saviour meek, your road pursue,
 with palms and scattered garments strewed.
- 2. Ride on, ride on majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die.
 O Christ, your triumphs now begin
 o'er captive death and conquered sin.
- 3. Ride on, ride on in majesty! The hosts of angels in the sky
 look down with sad and wond'ring eyes
 to see the approaching sacrifice.
- 4. Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die,
 bow your meek head to mortal pain,
 then take, O Christ, your pow'r and reign.

DISMISSAL

Let us go now in peace and have courage.
 Let us hold fast to what is good and return no one evil for evil.
 Let us strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak; and help the suffering.
 Let us honour all people, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 And may the Ancient of Days go with us and bless us. Amen.

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Those who wish to contribute their offerings of money for the support of our parish—whether staffing costs, utility bills or other financial needs—are encouraged to do so especially during this time when worship is suspended.

Contributions (in church envelopes) may be mailed in. Lisa Moore, our office administrator, will pick up the mail and be sure that those contributions are counted, credited and deposited.

As an alternative, members or friends may wish to use an "e-transfer" from a bank account directly to the church's bank account. Such electronic transfers of money (which are quite easy to make) need to be sent to this recipient-- livingfaithlutheran@gmail.com. In the message box at the bottom of the e-transfer form, please type in your envelope number (without using the # sign). In that way, our treasurer is able

to make sure that the donation/transfer is credited to the person(s) who made it and included in the year-end charitable tax deduction balance. Thank you.

During the time our Sunday worship remains suspended, we encourage everyone to check out our new website designed and maintained by Nicholas and Gordo Bone. Among other worship and learning resources, last Sunday's and this Sunday's video recordings of the sermon are posted. Although it is a "work in progress"--and always will be thanks to updating information--you can visit and view it at livingfaithlutheran.weebly.com

Special thanks to the members of council and the worship committee—and all others—who have gone the extra mile in making sure to stay in touch with the members and friends of Living Faith whether by phone or by email. . .or by dropping off printed copies of this service and sermon to those who do not have internet access. "Physical distancing" and "staying at home" does not and should not mean "social distancing" or "isolating"—especially for those who already feel isolated and cut off. Human beings are "social animals" (even introverts) and need and want to feel connected. So, please do what you can to help make that happen. Thank you.

For those interested in seeing how other Lutheran congregations in the BC Synod are carrying out their Sunday worship, you are welcome to "drop in" at those listed below.

- **Christ Lutheran, Chilliwack**
[Pre-recorded Sunday worship](#)
- **First Lutheran, Vancouver**
Sunday at 10:30 a.m. PDT
[Streamed via their website](#)
- **Good Shepherd Lutheran, Coquitlam**
[Pre-recorded Sunday worship](#)
- **Grace, Burnaby**
[Prerecorded services that go live Sunday at 10:00 a.m. PDT](#)
Visit www.graceburnaby.com for more information
- **Lutheran Church of the Cross, Victoria**
Sunday at 10:00 a.m. PDT and Lenten Evening Prayer Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. PDT
[Links to livesteam and worship bulletin from their website](#)
- **Our Saviour's, Prince George**
Sunday at 10:00 a.m. PDT
[Live stream via website](#)
- **Redeemer Lutheran, Vancouver**
[Pre-recorded Sunday worship services](#)
- **Shepherd of the Valley, Langley**
Pre-recorded Lenten and Sunday worship services via **[Facebook](#)** and youtube
- **St. Paul's, Prince Rupert**
Worship at 11:00 a.m. PDT
[Facebook live](#)
- **Trinity Anglican + Lutheran Church, Port Alberni**

Pre-recorded Sunday service
[Website](#) and [Facebook](#)

For other congregations and worshipping communities across Canada as well as a variety of other online resources, including the daily devotions prepared by our National Bishop, Susan Johnson, please visit the ELCIC (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada) website (elcic.ca).