

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH
ORDER OF WORSHIP July 26, 2020

Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness (stand)

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen

P: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

C: But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination

P: Let us confess our sins to God, our Father.

C: From depths of grief I cry to you, O Lord. My voice is trying to reach your heart and, break through with cries and sighing. If you keep a record of our sin and hold against us what we have thought and said and done, who then, can stand before you?

P: Upon this your confession, I proclaim the full and free grace of God to each and every one of you. Your every sin is completely forgiven and you are washed clean in the blood of Jesus Christ, the true and eternal Lamb of God. You now stand in the assembly of the saints of God clothed with the white robe of Jesus' righteousness as your very own. Rejoice and be glad: Jesus is yours, and along with Him, eternal life.

C: Amen.

KYRIE

P: In peace let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: 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.

C: Lord, have mercy.

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

C: Lord, have mercy.

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

C: Amen.

THE HYMN OF PRAISE

ALL: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father: We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God: You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

HYMN LW 102 All Glory, Laud, and Honor

Refrain

*All glory, laud, and honor
To you, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.*

**You are the king of Israel
And David's royal Son,
Now in the Lord's name coming,
Our King and Blessed One.**

Refrain

**The company of angels
Are praising you on high;
Creation and all mortals
In chorus make reply.**

Refrain

**The multitude of pilgrims
With palms before you went,
Our praise and prayer and anthems
Before you we present.**

Refrain

**To you, before your Passion,
They sang their hymns of praise.
To you, now high exalted,
Our melody we raise.**

Refrain

**Their praises you accepted;
Accept the prayers we bring,
Great author of all goodness,
O good and gracious King.**

Refrain

SCRIPTURE READINGS *(be seated)*

Jeremiah 2:1-3, 11-13

The word of the LORD came to me: "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: "This is what the LORD says: " 'I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown. Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of his harvest; all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them,' " declares the LORD...Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols. Be appalled at this, you heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

Psalm 143

(Read Responsively-Reader=unbold **Congregation=BOLD**)

LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief.

Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you.

The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground; he makes me dwell in the darkness like those long dead.

So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed.

I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.

I spread out my hands to you; I thirst for you like a parched land.

Answer me quickly, LORD; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit.

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.

Rescue me from my enemies, LORD, for I hide myself in you.

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

For your name's sake, LORD, preserve my life; in your righteousness, bring me out of trouble.

In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes, for I am your servant.

Philippians 3:12-21

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Here end the readings. Please stand for the Gospel.

GOSPEL

R: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 7th chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

John 7:37-38

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

R: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ

HYMN LSB 837 Lift High The Cross

Refrain:

**Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
Till all the world adore His sacred name.**

**Come, Christians, follow where our Captain trod,
Our king victorious, Christ, the Son of God.
[Refrain]**

**Led on their way by this triumphant sign,
The hosts of God in conqu'ring ranks combine.
[Refrain]**

**All newborn soldiers of the Crucified
Bear on their brows the seal of Him who died.
[Refrain]**

**O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
As Thou hast promised, draw us all to Thee.
[Refrain]**

**Let ev'ry race and ev'ry language tell
Of Him who saves our lives from death and hell.
[Refrain]**

Sermon- "Thirst"
Psalm 143:6; John 7:33-39a

When I was a young man I spent two summers working for the forest service. Our base camp was in the St. Joe National Forest in northern Idaho but we spent most of the summer fighting forest fires all over the place. From June through August electrical storms form over Idaho and the lightning sets trees and underbrush on fire. We'd hear the camp boss yell, "Let's go!" And we'd put on our boots and climb in the back of a transport truck and off we'd go. One of the things I learned from firefighting was what it meant to be thirsty. I mean, really thirsty. When it's 85 degrees out and you're digging a firetrail twenty or thirty feet away from a fire, you get very thirsty, very fast. After we ran out of the water we'd brought along we would have to depend on streams and springs which weren't always nearby. So we'd send a member of the crew out to find one and bring back water. As we would wait for him to come back, I used to identify with someone who was lost in a desert. Or with how Jesus felt when he cried out on the cross, "I thirst!"

There is a story about an old monk and a young monk walking through the woods. The young monk asked the old monk, "what can I do that would most please the Lord?" They were coming to a river and the old monk instructed the young monk to kneel down by the bank of the river. When he had done so, the old monk knelt down beside him, grabbed his head, shoved it under the water and held it there for thirty or forty seconds. The young monk thrashed about trying to get his head out of the water and finally the old monk let him go. After he stopped sputtering and coughing he asked the older monk, "Why in the world did you do that?" The old monk said to him: "when you yearn for the Lord like you yearned for air when you thought you were drowning, you will please him more than anything else you can do." Nothing pleases God more than for one of his children to thirst for him more than for anything else in the world. As Jesus said, "if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink!"

Our problem is that we thirst for things God has made rather than for God himself. There are of course things we thirst for that we do need. We need food, clothing and shelter. We need family and friends. We need jobs. We need healthcare when we're sick. And God provides all these things. It isn't obvious to us that God is providing all these things because we have a Bart Simpson way of imagining that we're providing them for ourselves. But when we're honest with ourselves, we know that it is God who does the providing--as Luther says in his catechism: "...God has made me and all creatures; he has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. All this he does out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me." God does indeed provide for all our needs.

God does indeed provide for all our needs. But the one thing God provides which we need the most but usually think about the least is a relationship with him. David cries out in *Psalm 143*.

“Answer me quickly, o Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit. Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.” Our greatest need is to have a close relationship with God. St. Augustine said: “our hearts cannot know peace until they find their rest in thee.” We were designed—programmed if you like—to live in an intimate fellowship with our heavenly father. A relationship like Adam and Eve had with God before they ate the poisoned fruit. But when sin entered the world it severed their relationship with God--and the shock waves of that disjunction still resound through all creation. They obscure our thoughts of God and hide him from our eyes. We grope about, led only by our sin-dimmed senses and our puny power of reason, the blind leading the blind, and falling into ditch after ditch until we give up and despair of finding the truth. We become like one of the Russians Tolstoi described who, “...knows nothing and wants to know nothing because he believes that nothing can be known.” Sounds like a professor of philosophy at one of our contemporary universities. So we abandon our search for truth, lose sight of our crucial need for fellowship with our creator and redeemer, and focus on superficial things.

But down deep, our thirst for God doesn't go away. And it has ways of making itself known to us. For some people it's a feeling that something just isn't quite right with their lives--that things are “out of kilter” in a way they can't quite put their finger on. I recall an old country western song that went, “I've got both ends out in the middle but I can't seem to get 'em tied.” For others it takes the form of a sense of dislocation--that they are never exactly where they feel they should be--although they have no idea of where that is. For still others it's a nagging sense of urgency: they are always trying to hurry up and finish whatever they're doing, even when they have nothing to do next. A friend of mine who recently retired said, “I have nothing to do and I can't wait to get to it.” As a Pastor I've had more than one man confide in me that they feel like they're just headed down the wrong path in life but they don't know what the right path is. Many Christians feel a lack of God's presence in their lives. Mother Theresa of Calcutta wrote in her diary in her later years, “when I look inside myself there is nothing: God is not there.” I think of it as the “Christmas will be perfect next year” syndrome. When Karen and I started having children we always wanted to make Christmas day perfect for them. Perfect presents, a perfectly decorated tree, perfect weather that had to include snow to make it a white Christmas, a perfect meal, every child perfectly happy. And our Christmases were joyous events. They were almost perfect, but there always seemed to be something that wasn't quite right. One of the kids would be sick. I couldn't get my camera to work properly. The furnace would threaten to go on the fritz. There was a problem at work I couldn't get off my mind. At the end of the day I would end up thinking, “this Christmas was ok but next year Christmas will be perfect!” The perfect Christmas was always one year out!

Feelings of urgency or dislocation or emptiness or of things being “out of kilter” all come from the same place. They come from forgetting about our relationship with God. Deep down in our souls we long for God, like a lost child longs for his mother and can't be consoled by anyone else. We have a soul thirst for God. According to the prophet Jeremiah, we try to satisfy our soul thirst by digging our own wells rather than going to the well that will supply us with living water. He wrote, “my people have committed two sins: they have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”

We oversupply our superficial needs and try to find satisfaction in the surplus rather than seek God where he wants to be found. We clutter up our lives with so many other things that we lose sight of our thirst for God. It's there—we just don't feel it. How do we keep in mind our thirst for God?

Let me tell you a little story about how he recently reminded me of my thirst for him. We have a cat named Chloe. I'm sure you've heard me complain about her. Chloe is without a doubt the most irritating cat that ever lived. For seventeen years she has been clawing our upholstery, ripping at our carpets, throwing up all over the house and terrifying any other cat we've tried to bring into our home. But worst of all, Chloe *howls*. Not "meows" but *howls*. Ever heard the word, "caterwaul?" It's defined as "howling in a shrill, piercing manner." Chloe begins caterwauling sometime between 5:30 and 6:00 in the morning. Rip Van Winkle couldn't sleep through that sound. Karen gets up and feeds her then she resumes her caterwauling. When she finally stops, she crawls into one of our laps and demands to be petted. Two days ago, I was petting Chloe while reflecting how little she deserved it, and a thought came into my mind. In God's eyes, wasn't I a lot like Chloe? I was continually unappreciative, dissatisfied and constantly complaining—all the while expecting to be treated lovingly. No wonder the Bible tells us that, "precious to God is the death of his saints." It may be only death that finally stops our complaining.

God alone knows why Chloe is the way she is. But he has entrusted this poor, miserable creature to our care and however offensive she may be, we are bound to care for her and treat her with love. Just like God has bound himself to care for me, a poor miserable creature who deserves to be kicked out of his kingdom, but expects to be loved. In her old age, Chloe has developed an almost insatiable thirst; she laps up water all the day long. But now when I watch her drink, it reminds me that whether I "feel" it or not, my soul is a parched land that thirsts for God. And you know something? I'm starting to feel a little thirstier. So now along with David, I pray every day: "my soul thirsts for you, Lord!" And I hear Jesus answer: "come to me and drink!" Amen.

APOSTLE'S CREED

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

LORD'S PRAYER

All: 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.

CLOSING HYMN LSB 717 Eternal Father, Strong to Save

**Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep:
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.**

**O Christ, the Lord of hill and plain,
O'er which our traffic runs amain.
By mountain pass or valley low;
Wherever, Lord, Thy people go,
Protect them by Thy guarding hand
From every peril on the land.**

**O Spirit, whom the Father sent
To spread abroad the firmament:
O Wind of heaven, by Thy might
Save all who dare the eagle's flight,
And keep them by Thy watchful care
From ever'y peril in the air.**

**O Trinity of love and pow'r,
Our people shield in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them where-soe'er they go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad praise from air and land and sea.**

BLESSING

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ☩ give you peace.

C: Amen.