



seeking:

*Will you wash
my feet?*

April 6, 2023 + Maundy Thursday

*An asterisk * invites you to stand in body or in spirit, and you are invited to read aloud responses found in **bold**.*

We welcome you to First Lutheran Church!

we GATHER here

Prelude — “O God of Mercy”

Setting by Godfrey Thring
Sharon Malm, voice and piano

Words of Welcome

***Confession and Forgiveness**

*We go back in
time to our Ash
Wednesday
confession. On
Maundy
Thursday, we
hear Jesus tell us
about the
Greatest
Commandment,
to love one
another.*

At the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday, the scripture passage in Isaiah tells the story of people who are trying hard to be faithful. They ask God, “God, do you notice? Do you see all the good we’re doing?

Are you proud of us?” It sounds a bit like children seeking parental attention.
Did we do a good job?

In those moments we always want to hear God say, “Excellent job, good and faithful servant.” But in Isaiah, God says to the people, “I want you to seek justice.”

Friends, faith is a constant dance of us asking God, “Am I doing it right?” and, “How can I do better?”

During confession, we linger in this tension for a moment. We acknowledge that we are works in progress and we ask for God’s help. God may challenge us, but fortunately, God will never abandon us. So let us turn to God in prayer.

Merciful God, how many times in a day could we choose love?

How many times could we choose justice?

How many times could we speak kindly to ourselves?

How many times could we offer grace?

How many times, God? And how often do we miss it?

Forgive us for choosing the path you did not travel.

Forgive us for hitching our horse to the world's measure of goodness, instead of yours.

Return our hearts to you, and guide us continually, even in the parched places.

With gratitude we pray, **amen.**

Family of faith, when a baby is learning to walk, the parents do not criticize the baby for falling. Instead, they celebrate every wobbly step. They applaud every hesitant stand. They whoop and holler when their child lands in their arms.

Surely the same must be true of God. Although we often lose our way and we often choose the wrong thing, I imagine God whoops and hollers with every step in God's direction.

So hear and believe the good news of the gospel: no matter how many times we fall, no matter how many times we choose the wrong path, God is waiting for us at the end with open arms. In Jesus' name ✝, your sins are forgiven. We are invited. We belong. **Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.**

You are invited to come up to the rail, either kneeling or standing, for a time of prayer with the pastor.

"Where true charity and love abide, God is dwelling there." We ponder and pray that "our hearts ever be one in faithful love." The full text can be found at hymn no. 653.

Laying on of Hands & Absolution

Anthem

"Where True Charity and Love Abide"

Plainsong
Bonse Aba Singers

*Prayer of the Day

May God be with you. **And also with you.** Let us pray.

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 the 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.**

Hearing & Responding to Scripture

A Reading from the Book of Exodus — Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell 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. If 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. This 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. For 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. The 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.

This 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.

Hear these words of old **as we seek to know God today.**

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19 — *spoken responsively by verse*

I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my supplications.
**Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.**
What shall I return to the Lord
for all his bounty to me?
**I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord,**
I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people.
Precious in the sight of the Lord

is the death of his faithful ones.
O Lord, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of your serving girl
You have loosed my bonds.
**I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
and call on the name of the Lord.**
I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people,
**in the courts of the house of the Lord,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.**
Praise the Lord!

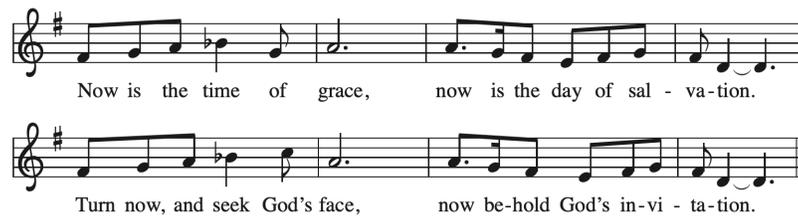
A Reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians — 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Hear these words of old **as we seek to know God today.**

*Behold God's
invitation to have
your feet washed
and to wash each
other's feet in
service and love
of all people.*

***Gospel Acclamation** — no. 918 from *All Creation Sings*



Now is the time of grace, now is the day of sal - va - tion.
Turn now, and seek God's face, now be-hold God's in - vi - ta - tion.

***Gospel** — John 13:1-17, 31b-35

The Gospel of John, the 13th chapter.
Glory to you, O God.

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. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then 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. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus 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." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After 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? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are

messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

“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. Little 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.’ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The Gospel of Jesus.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Pastor Chris Culuris

This hymn combines the various gospel accounts of Jesus' last night with his disciples, reminding us of both communion and foot washing, two physical reminders of Christ's love for and inclusion of all that we are called to model in our lives.

*Hymn — from *Glory to God*

“An Upper Room Did Our Lord Prepare”

1 An up - per room did our Lord pre - pare for those he
2 A last - ing gift Je - sus gave his own: to share his
3 And af - ter sup - per he washed their feet, for ser - vice,
4 No end there is! We de - part in peace, he loves be -

loved un - til the end: and his dis - ci - ples still
bread, his lov - ing cup. What - ev - er bur - dens may
too, is sac - ra - ment. In Christ our joy shall be
yond the ut - ter - most: in ev - ery room in our

gath - er there to cel - e - brate their ris - en friend.
bow us down, he by his cross shall lift us up.
made com - plete: sent out to serve, as he was sent.
Fa - ther's house Christ will be there, as Lord and Host.

*Prayers of Intercession

A: God among us,

When we cry out for justice, you hear us. When we fall to our knees, you witness us. When we lean into your comfort, you hold us. When we lose our way, you guide us. Hear our prayers. Stay with us here as we seek your way toward hope and wholeness.

We name, O God, that at times it is hard to stay loving
in the face of cruelty, neglect, and harm.

Yet even when Jesus knew his friends would betray and abandon him, he showed us
how to center our whole selves in your love
instead of the hatred of people and the injustice of systems of power.

May we go and do likewise, as he called us to do,

so that our love for others will be a testimony to all you have done in our lives.

Through the life and ministry of Jesus, you taught us how to love fiercely,
how to honor one another fully, and how to serve with humility and kindness.

Through grace, you join us together as one body.

Be with us today and every day as we seek

to pour out love as disciples of Jesus. Amen.

This hymn (no. 402) is a beautiful prayer to the Spirit. The last verse connects to the Greatest Commandment: "Come with the vision and the strength I need to serve my God and all humanity; fulfillment of my life in love outpoured: my life in you, O Christ, your love in me."

Sharing the Meal

*The Washing of Hands and Offering Time

Music For Reflection

"Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ"

Setting by Anne Krentz Organ
Handbell Quartet

*Offering Prayer

A: God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is sure. Receive the gifts we bring, and nourish us to proclaim your abiding love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. Amen.

*The Great Thanksgiving — pg. 161, front of hymnal

*Sanctus — pg. 162, front of hymnal

*Words of Institution and Prayers

P: God of the lost and the found, surely it is right for us to give our thanks and praise; for day after day we look for you, and day after day we find you: in the laughter of children, in the sun rising over the horizon, in the flowers of spring.

Our seeking does not go unanswered, and for that we are grateful. So first and foremost, we come to you in prayer to say thank you, for when we're seeking beauty, you give us mountains and freckles, green eyes and brown eyes. When we're looking for reason to hope, you give us rainbows after the storm, and candles flickering in the window. When we're seeking peace, you give us three part harmony and the sound of the rain. And when we're seeking justice, your life reminds us that everyone is welcome at your Table, and none shall be turned away.

For all these reminders we are deeply grateful. And yet, gracious God, our seeking does not stop. For even though your fingerprints are all over this world, we are not yet at your promised day.

So in addition to our gratitude, we also pray today for conviction. Do not let us get comfortable with half-hearted seeking. Do not let us grow numb to the suffering of this world. Make us relentless in our pursuit of justice—relentless in our consoling of the grieving, in our welcoming of the stranger, and in the feeding of the hungry. Like a dog with a scent, may we walk toward your kingdom, never giving up, never wandering off the path.

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.

And as we see and as we seek, pour out your Spirit on this ordinary bread and cup. May this meal be the nourishment we need to continue seeking you in the world. Until your promised day, we will pray. Until your promised day, we will seek, saying: **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.**

*Invitation to the Table

P: Friends, if your seeking has led you here,
if your weary heart followed breadcrumbs all the way to this sanctuary,
then I have good news: you do not have to seek anymore.
This table is God's Table. So if you came here looking for justice,
then rest in the comfort that all will be fed here. If you came seeking beauty,
then let your spirit marvel at the beauty of a community coming together.
If you came seeking a brush with the Divine,
then know that God is present in this ordinary meal.
So kick off your walking shoes. Let your weary heart stop the search.
We are standing on holy ground. This is God's Table. All are invited. Come.

Distribution of Communion

Two hymns in very different styles accompany our communion at the rail. We sing of loving and serving our neighbors in each.

Lamb of God — pg. 164, *front of hymnal*

Hymn — no. 708

“Jesu, Jesu Fill Us with Your Love”

Hymn — no. 462

“Now We Join in Celebration”

Prayer After Communion

P: God of manna and mustard seeds, we came to this Table hungry and we leave feeling full—full of hope, full of promise, full of what could be. For we not only found glimpses of you at this Table, but we caught a glimpse of the way things could be: in a meal where all are welcomed and all are fed. Is there anything holier than that? Thank you for nourishing our curiosity alongside our spirit and our conviction. May we always seek you the way you seek after us. With grateful hearts we pray, amen.

Please remain seated until the cross is carried to the back of the Sanctuary.

Departing to Serve God's World

Stripping of the Altar

Psalm 22, chanted by Cantor

*You are invited into a time of silent prayer and reflection in the sanctuary.
Feel free to use the communion rail, and please depart in silence to respect those remaining for meditation.*

The service continues tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m.

Worship Assistants

Pastor: Chris Culuris
Director of Music: Emily Bruflat
Assisting Minister: Larry Kiewel
Audio/Video: Brett Peterson

Reader: John Holte
Ushers: Michelle Doose
Musicians: Bonse Aba Singers; Sharon Malm; Handbell Quartet

Communion Preparers: Mary Spear
Communion Servers: Mary Spear
Bread Bakers: Michelle Doose

Acknowledgements

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