

LENTEN MIDWEEK

April 6, 2022

DEATH TO RESURRECTION: THE WILDERNESS TO THE PROMISED LAND

The journey through a desolate place causes concern. In the midst of a desert, we wonder if we have enough water and food. In the middle of a drive across the wilderness of the western plains, we repeatedly check the fuel gauge. We know that that death awaits the unprepared in the wilds and woolies. Indeed, the wilderness has always been considered a place of death and separation, a place of exile from all that we long for and hold dear, even our life. A journey through the wilderness is dangerous, but what waits for those who arrive at the other side? New life, a resurrection, a promised land where the Lord provides all good things, all life-giving and life-sustaining things; these are the blessings that come to the people of God from the hand of God as He brings us out of the wilderness of sin and into the paradise purchased by His Son. From the wilderness to the promised land — from death to life — a return from exile!

Hymn “We Are Exiles from the Garden”

We are exiles from the garden,
Banished by our sinful choice,
Terrified to seek His pardon,
Hiding from our Father’s voice.
Underneath the branches swaying,
Sweat and blood fall to the ground.
In the darkness, Christ is praying;
He comes forward to be bound.

Leaves will fail our vain concealing
Our true nakedness and shame.
We must rend our hearts, revealing
All our guilt and sinful blame.
Jesus takes our flesh and sentence
As His clothes are claimed below.
We fall down in true repentance;
His new robe He will bestow.

On the mount, the Lord is waiting
For the proper sacrifice.
What is worth His wrath abating?
Who could pay the dreadful price?
God the Son will be the scion.
God the Father will provide.
God the Spirit points to Zion;
There, with God, we will abide.

On this journey we are taking,
We fear not what lies in store.
Though our feeble wills are breaking,
We know Christ has gone before.
As we walk the way completed,
On His throne, the Savior waits.
Death and hell have been unseated.
We behold the open gates!

Opening Sentences

P: Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears!

C: **For I am a sojourner with You, a guest, like all my fathers.** *Psalm. 39:12*

P: Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to Me, says the LORD of hosts,

C: **and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.** *Zechariah 1:3*

P: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;

C: **let him return to the LORD, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.** *Isaiah 55:7*

P: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;

C: **they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.** *Isaiah 35:10*

C: **Glory be to the Father**

and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning,

is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears!

C: **For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers.** *Psalm 39:12*

Confession

P: We are on a journey from a deserved exile to a gracious promised land. Although we merit nothing, because our heavenly Father promises forgiveness and mercy to all who call on Him for Jesus' sake, let us go to Him, confessing our sin.

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination

P: Heavenly Father, we are fallen creatures, prone to hiding our faults from one another, yet knowing our sins are laid bare before You.

C: **Forgive us and clothe us with Christ's own righteousness.**

P: We have erred and strayed from Your way.

C: **Forgive us and turn our feet toward the paradise You promise.**

P: We have attempted to placate Your just demands by our own efforts.

C: **Forgive us for the sake of Your Son's sacrifice in our stead.**

P: We have often failed to reflect the new life You granted us in our Baptism.

C: **Forgive us and drown the old Adam within us.**

P: We have eaten "forbidden fruit" in our disobedient thinking, speaking, and acting.

C: **Forgive us and grant us the new life won on the tree of the cross.**

P: We have failed to trust Your care and protection as we journey through this wilderness.

C: **Forgive us and accompany us on our pilgrim way.**

Forgiveness

P: Our gracious God, even when we were dead in our trespasses, You made us alive together with Christ. You who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. May He Who began this good work in you bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (*Ephesians 2:5, 13 & Philippians 1:6*).

C: **Amen.**

Scripture Reading *Joshua 3:1-6, 14-17*

P: A reading from the third chapter of Joshua.

Then Joshua rose early in the morning and they set out from Shittim. And they came to the Jordan, he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. At the end of three days the officers went through the camp and commanded the people, "As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it. Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before." Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." And Joshua said to the priests, "Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people

So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Scripture Reading *Matthew 3:13, 16-17; 4:1-2*

P: A reading from the third & fourth chapters of Matthew.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. . . .

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." . . .

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Hymn #424 "O Christ, You Walked the Road"

O Christ, You walked the road
Our wand'ring feet must go.
You faced with us temptation's pow'r
And fought our ancient foe.

No bread of earth alone
Can fill our hung'ring hearts.
Lord, help us seek Your living Word,
The food Your grace imparts.

No blinding sign we ask,
No wonder from above.
Lord, help us place our trust alone
In Your unswerving love.

When lures of easy gain
With promise brightly shine,
Lord, help us seek Your kingdom first;
Our wills with Yours align.

O Christ, You walked the road
Our wand'ring feet must go.
Stay with us through temptation's hour
To fight our ancient foe.

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Sermon

"DEATH TO RESURRECTION: THE WILDERNESS TO THE PROMISED LAND"

Offering

Prayer of the Church

P: We are returning from exile, listening to the inviting Word of God, full of grace and truth. Let us respond to Him in prayer.

P: Gracious God, offering full and free forgiveness,

C: **we come in spiritual sackcloth and ashes, painfully aware of our sins and failings. Graciously wash us and clothe us with the robe of Christ's own righteousness so that we may live eternally with all Your saints.**

P: Eden's Lord and ours,

C: **hear us and all who call out to You in pain and sorrow, sweat or tears. Remind us of Your painful victory over every temptation, and strengthen us to follow where You have led the way.**

P: Loving Father, calling us to Mount Calvary,

C: **remove from us our fear of Your righteous judgment for our sins; strengthen our faith in the all-availing sacrifice of Your Son in our stead.**

P: Spirit of life,

C: **remind us again of our Baptism, in which our old Adam was drowned; strengthen us to live in the freedom of the children of God.**

P: Lord Jesus, Savior and Guide,

C: **give us the eyes of faith to see the tree of life awaiting us in heaven, and guide us to follow where You have led the way.**

P: Protecting Father,

C: **assure us of Your presence on our journey through the desert of this world and bring us at last to the paradise purchased by Your Son.**

P: O Holy Spirit,

C: **nourish our faith and restore our souls each time we come to the Table of the Lord and receive His body and blood, a foretaste of the feast to come.**

P: Holy and merciful Lord over all,

C: **we feel the burden of our sin; renew in us the firm faith that Your Son has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, giving His life for ours.**

P: Everlasting Father,

C: **Our Savior has conquered death. Fill us with rejoicing, confident that we shall therefore gather around the eternal throne of the Lamb, Your Son, Who with You and the Holy Spirit are one God, now and forever. Amen.**

P: Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**C: 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.**

Nunc Dimittis

Luke 2:29–32 (antiphon: liturgical text)

P: Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping,

C: that awake we may watch with Christ and asleep we may rest in peace.

P: Lord, now You let Your servant go in peace; Your word has been fulfilled.

C: My own eyes have seen the salvation which You have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to reveal You to the nations and the glory of Your people Israel.

P: Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping,

C: that awake we may watch with Christ and asleep we may rest in peace.

Benediction

P: The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, and ✠ Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless you and keep you.

C: Amen.

Hymn #878 “Abide with Me”

final verse will be sung a capella

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.
Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.
*And when at last You come again to save,
Raise us to life and bring us from the grave!
And then with all Your people, strong and free
I shall rejoice, for You abide with me.*

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Dismissal

P: Go in peace as you serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.