

GATHERING AROUND GOD'S WORD

GREETING, PSALM OF PRAISE, AND OPENING PRAYER

¹I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come? ²My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. ³He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand. ⁶The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. ⁸The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore. With thanksgiving, we offer our prayer: Loving God, in a doubting world, keep us alive in our faith that promises Jesus is our Messiah, your Son and our brother, that we may have life in his name. Amen.

VOLUNTARY

I Know Whom I Have Believed
Melody Davis

Arr. Ruth E. Schram

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN (insert) *He Lives*

CALL TO CONFESSION

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, too often we are afraid to let go of the old. It is good and right for us to confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole. Together, we pray:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We use many words, gracious God, but forget at times to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we often choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most. Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God. Amen

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

This is the word we have heard: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ. Our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life. Thanks be to God. Amen.

PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God of mercy, you promised never to break your covenant with us. Amid all the changing words of our generation, speak your eternal Word that does not change. Then may we respond to your gracious promises with faithful and obedient lives; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

EPISTLE READING (*Pew Bible, page 232*)

1 Peter 1: 3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

ANTHEM

Hallelujah! Amen!
Sanctuary Choir

G.F. Handel

NEW TESTAMENT READING (*Pew Bible, page 115*)

John 20: 19-31

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." ²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." ²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." ³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

*HYMN 240 *Alleluia, Alleluia!*

SERMON

Indescribable and Glorious Joy Jars

Sherry Holloman

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS FOR HOPE

Lord Jesus Christ, in this world where hopes have been dashed and dreams broken, we remember today the faith in the future you brought to so many, both through your coming and through your resurrection from the dead. So, Lord Jesus, where faith has died and dreams have faded, may hope flower again. We remember how Mary and Joseph looked forward to the day of your birth, how shepherds and magi caught their breath in wonder as they knelt before you, how the hearts of Anna and Simeon leapt in anticipation, and how your disciples and the crowds that flocked to hear you gave thanks, convinced that you were the Messiah, the one God had promised, the long-awaited deliverer come to set them free. So, Lord Jesus, where faith has died and dreams have faded, may hope flower again.

We remember how that vision of the future was shattered by events to follow – your pain, humiliation, suffering and death – hope ebbing away as the lifeblood seeped from your body – an end to their dreams, an end to everything. So, Lord Jesus, where faith has died and dreams have faded, may hope flower again. We remember how the news spread that the tomb was empty, the stone rolled away, your body gone, and how despite it all, your followers could scarcely bring themselves to hope – afraid to take the risk of faith in case they should face the heartache of losing you once more. So, Lord Jesus, where faith has died and dreams have faded, may hope flower again.

But we remember finally how you appeared, in all your risen glory – in the garden, in the upstairs room, on the Emmaus road, by the Sea of Galilee – and the dream was born again, the smoldering embers of faith rekindled. So, Lord Jesus, where faith has died and dreams have faded, may hope flower again. Lord Jesus Christ, a world is waiting, hurting, longing, searching for hope, crying out for meaning, hungry for some reason to believe in the future. Come again in your living power. May hope flower again and new life given to all.

Loving God, we offer up these prayers of concern this day - for those struggling to rebuild lives from natural disasters, especially those recovering from the recent tornadoes, for those recovering from human disasters from failed economies, for those struggling with COVID19 and other illnesses that rob mind, body or spirit of good health. For our own family and friends, our world, you know the prayers of our hearts and our lips, so incline your ear to our words, silent shouting cries, mournful whispers stunned wordless. Be gentle with our suffering with our sorrows and losses, and especially when our hard hearts close us off to you. Be gentle. O God, be God! Anoint us with your touch so that the softness of your love can break into our hardness and open us anew. Anoint us, Holy One and fill us with you loving touch that we may fill others in the name of our Lord who taught us to pray, saying:

THE 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERTORY SENTENCE

God raised Jesus from the dead that we might forever live. Such a generous act not only showers us with grace, it begs a response. With thanksgiving, may we offer the best of ourselves to God.

PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

*Doubting Thomas
Sanctuary Choir*

Hank Beebe

*RESPONSE 606 *Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow*

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Living, loving God, we give thanks and praise that the doors of our hearts can't keep you out, and the doors of our churches can't keep you in! May your breath blow anew through the world, may your spirit fill the lives of those who believed they were beyond your reach! May we who have been so blessed with the joy of this Easter redemption be generous in sharing all that we are and all that we have, so that the power of the resurrection might reach all your children. In Christ's Holy name, we pray. Amen.

GOING INTO THE WORLD WITH GOD'S WORD

* INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP AND BENEDECTION

"Peace be with you," Jesus says to us in this room. "As the Father sent me, so I send you." No doubt or fear can lock God out of our lives. Remember that as you leave this place, sent forward to live by faith. Sent forth to be witnesses to the living faith of our risen Lord to all you meet. Go now with God's blessing: The presence of the saving Christ, the wisdom of the living God, and the support of the loving Spirit, be with you every step of the way, now and always. Amen!

*RECESSIONAL HYMN 250 *In the Bulb There Is a Flower*

**You may stand if you wish*