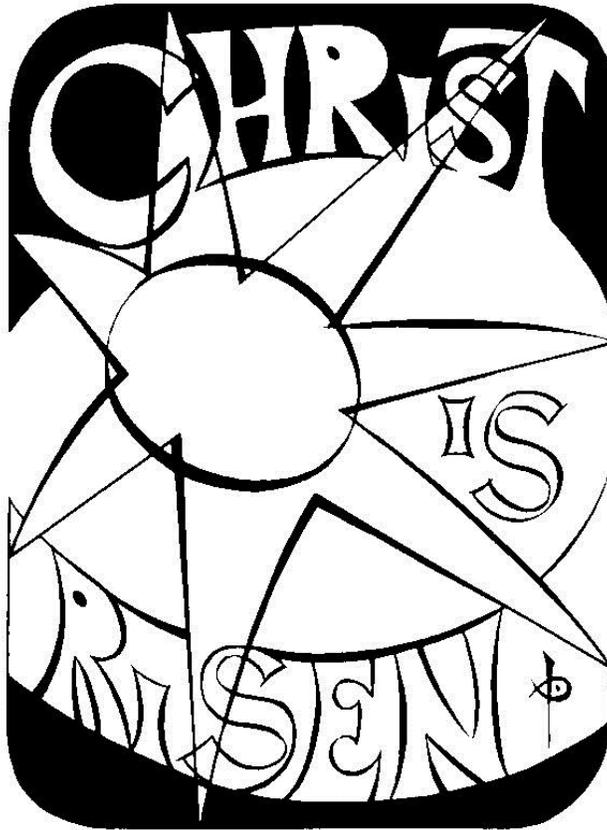


St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
A Family Connecting in Christ



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IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we are quick to look past Good Friday and Easter. Why? Some days, we want to run with our fears. Some days, we want to run away from the life God has for us. Some days, we just want to live spring! So we look past Good Friday and Easter.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we are stopped to look and listen to Jesus and see the new life he has for us!

OPENING HYMN

"Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia"

Hymn 150

Christ the Lord is ris'n today; Alleluia!
Christians, hasten on your way; Alleluia!
See the place where he was laid; Alleluia!
Praise him for the ransom paid. Alleluia!

For the sheep the Lamb has bled, Alleluia!
Sinless in the sinners' stead. Alleluia!
"Christ is ris'n," today we cry; Alleluia!
Now he lives, no more to die. Alleluia!

Christ, the victim undefiled, Alleluia!
God and sinners reconciled. Alleluia!
While, in strange and awe-full strife, Alleluia!
Met together death and life. Alleluia!

Christ, who once for sinners bled, Alleluia!
Now the first-born from the dead, Alleluia!
Throned in endless might and pow'r, Alleluia!
Lives and reigns forevermore. Alleluia!

INVOCATION

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

C: **Amen.**

EASTER PROMISE AND POWER

John 20:19-23

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

For faithless worrying and selfish pride,

For sins of habit and sins of choice,

For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant:

I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY *Kyrie*†

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

† *Kyrie* is the Greek word for Lord. The expression "Lord, have mercy" is one of the oldest worship responses in the Christian church

HYMN

"Like the Golden Sun Ascending"

Hymn 147

(vs. 2-4)

Thanks to you, O Christ victorious!
Thanks to you, O Lord of life!
Death has now no power o'er us,
You have conquered in the strife.
Thanks because you did arise
And have opened paradise!
None can fully sing the glory
Of the resurrection story.

You have died for my transgression;
All my sins on you were laid.
You have won for me salvation;
On the cross my debt was paid.

From the grave I shall arise
And shall meet you in the skies.
Death itself is transitory;
I shall lift my head in glory.

Grant me grace, O blessed Savior,
And your Holy Spirit send
That my life and my behavior
May be pleasing to the end,
That I may not fall again
Into death's grim pit and pain,
Whence by grace you have retrieved me
And from which you have relieved me.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O risen Lord, you rule over all things for the good of your Church. For our good, you have stopped so much of the world around us. Where we are still going off in the wrong direction, stop us by your Word and Spirit (or I weakly hesitate to say this, by whatever it takes), so that we look and listen, see and hear the direction and promise that you have for us - for your glory and the good of your Church, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Note - That parenthetical comment “(or whatever it takes)” can be hard to pray; we want God to be easy with us. But sometimes we don’t pay attention to easy, do we? And sometimes we are willing to do almost anything to avoid what God wants, as we see in the life of Jonah.

FIRST LESSON

JONAH 2

From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. He said:

“In my distress I called to the Lord,
and he answered me.

From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help,
and you listened to my cry.
You hurled me into the depths,
into the very heart of the seas,
and the currents swirled about me;
all your waves and breakers
swept over me.
I said, 'I have been banished
from your sight;
yet I will look again
toward your holy temple.'
The engulfing waters threatened me,
the deep surrounded me;
seaweed was wrapped around my head.
To the roots of the mountains I sank down;
the earth beneath barred me in forever.
But you, Lord my God,
brought my life up from the pit.

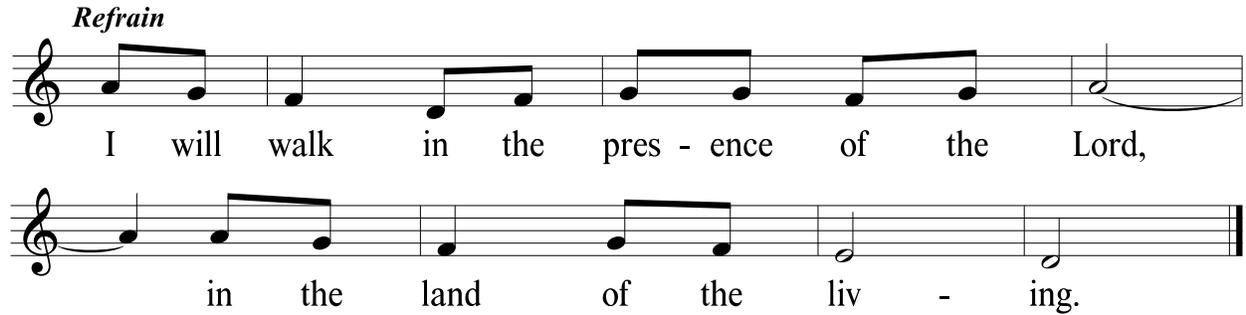
"When my life was ebbing away,
I remembered you, Lord,
and my prayer rose to you,
to your holy temple.

"Those who cling to worthless idols
turn away from God's love for them.
But I, with shouts of grateful praise,
will sacrifice to you.
What I have vowed I will make good.
I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.'"

And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

PSALM 16

Refrain



I will walk in the pres - ence of the Lord,
in the land of the liv - ing.

Psalm tone



Keep me `safe, O God,*
for in you I take `refuge.

I said to the LORD, "You `are my Lord;*"
apart from you I have `no good thing."

I have set the LORD always be `fore me.*
Because he is at my right hand, I will not be `shaken. *Refrain*

My heart is glad and my tongue re `joices;*"
my body also will `rest secure,

Because you will not abandon me `to the grave,*
nor will you let your Holy One `see decay,

You have made known to me the `path of life;*"
you will fill me with joy in your `presence.

**Glory be to the Father and `to the Son*
and to the Holy `Spirit,
as it was in the be `ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. `Amen.**

Refrain

Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

M: Christ is risen!

C: **He is risen indeed!**

THE CREED

The Second Article Explanation by Martin Luther

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.

He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.

This is most certainly true.

HYMN OF THE DAY

"We Walk by Faith"
Hymn 756

We walk by faith and not by sight; No gracious words we hear
From him who spoke as none e'er spoke, But we believe him near.

We may not touch his hands and side Nor follow where he trod,
But in his promise we rejoice And cry, "My Lord and God!"

Help then, O Lord, our unbelief, And may our faith abound
To call on you when you are near And seek where you are found.

We walk by faith and not by sight; No gracious words we hear
From him who spoke as none e'er spoke, But we believe him near.

SERMON

JONAH 2

"Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!" "Alleluia!" "Death has been swallowed up in victory!" "Peace be with you!" Easter sounds so good, doesn't it?

Especially this year. This year when we're hearing death rates and our chest feels tight, when we're hearing death rates and we have a loved one who is sick. This year when we're hearing of paychecks and jobs being cut. This year when we hear ourselves cooped-up, stressed and stir-crazy, when we hear ourselves getting on each other's nerves, impatient and irritable, when we hear

ourselves and we have the good sense to be disgusted with ourselves. This year, Easter sounds so good!

Christ is risen! The Jesus who gave his life for you and for me, to pay our debt to God, for you and for me - he lives! And what does he say to you, to me, even when we disgust ourselves? "Peace be with you! I forgive you! The Father forgives you! You get to live forgiven! Peace!" Why? The Jesus who died for you is risen!

That sounds so good this year. Now, with Easter, we get to hear this, know this, believe this - Jesus keeps his promises, the Father keeps his promises. No matter how impossible, they keep their promises, "just as Jesus said." We might be wondering and worrying about this and that, but

- just as Jesus said, our Father will answer our prayers;
- just as Jesus said, our Father will meet our needs;
- just as Jesus said, he will keep us safe and alive with him today and forever!

Yes, with Easter, not only does Jesus live, we live! Not just to keep our heart pumping, not just to keep our brain waving, but we are alive to share the heart and the mind of Jesus, alive to share the life and love of Jesus with the world around us. Yes, we get to live alive with Jesus!

Easter sounds so good this year, doesn't it? Now what will we do with Easter? With Good Friday and Easter? What will we do with God's promises? With the new life Jesus gives us? When we hear it put like that, we want to take hold of Easter and live the Jesus-life, don't we? No excuses, no compromises. But sometimes what do we do? We pull a Jonah. We celebrate Easter, we hear Jesus' promises, and then we put them off to the side, close-by just in case we might need them, but still out of our way. Or maybe we celebrate Easter and take hold Jesus' promises, and we dress ourselves up with a bit of Jesus like

camouflage to hide what we really got going inside; we put some Jesus in our lives so we can look good and feel good when we're pulling our Jonah.

What's a Jonah? Most of us know Jonah as one of the blonde-hair, big-smile brothers who sit back there. We know Jonah and he puts a smile on our face. So when I talk about pulling a Jonah, I'm not talking about our Jonah; I'm talking about a different Jonah, the Bible Jonah, the Jonah in the belly of the big fish Jonah. That Jonah was God's prophet to Israel about 780 years before Jesus was born. As God's prophet, Jonah knew God's promises and he loved God's promises. But Jonah didn't always love living the new life that comes with God's promises.

And neither did God's people hearing those promises. As God was blessing them with peace and prosperity, instead of turning to God and getting closer to God, they did the opposite. They took God's peace and prosperity and went off and did their own thing, too busy, too distracted to listen to God. Sound familiar? So what did God do? He took his prophet and his promises and sent them to Israel's enemy, the Assyrians, the Ninevites of Nineveh.

That's when Jonah pulled a Jonah. You see, Jonah loved God and God's promises and God's blessings. He loved God and loved doing God's thing, when he agreed with God's thing. He loved God and loved doing God's thing, when doing God's thing fit with what he wanted. But when God called Jonah to do something that Jonah didn't like, that didn't fit his plans, then Jonah turned from God and went off his own way. Oh, Jonah still presented himself as a man of God. He still thought of himself as a man of God. But Jonah wasn't fooling God; he was only fooling himself.

Have you ever pulled a Jonah? God said: "This is the way" and you said: "that won't work for me." Ever pulled a Jonah like that? Easy question, isn't it? Here's a tougher question - in what part of your life are you pulling a Jonah today? You love God and his promises; you love God and his blessings. But God is expecting you, calling you, commanding you to do something you don't

want to do. And so, because you have your reasons, you tell yourself you love God and his promises, and then blow God off to do your own thing. In what part of your life are you pulling a Jonah? It can be so easy to hear Jesus: "Peace be with you," to hear his Church: "Christ is risen," to hear ourselves: "He is risen, indeed." It can be so easy to hear what we like and join in - Amen! But when God says something we don't like, out come the excuses and off we go without God, like Jonah.

So what did Jonah do? God told Jonah to head east, so Jonah went west. And what did God do? You remember that hard line we prayed earlier - "do whatever it takes to stop us from leaving you"? Well, God did whatever it took. As Jonah was sailing away, God hurls a storm at him, a storm so ferocious that when the sailors find out whose fault it is, they figure they don't have any choice but to throw Jonah overboard or they would all drown.

Thrown overboard in a storm. We might think: "Not a good place to be." It was the exact right place for Jonah to be. Thrown overboard, Jonah remembered God, his power and his promises. Sinking to the bottom of the sea, he prayed and prayed. And when Jonah was at the bottom of the sea getting tangled in seaweed, even as Jonah figured he was as good as dead, God answered. He provided a giant sea creature, a giant fish and delivered Jonah. For three days Jonah was in the belly of that fish. Enough time to stop, to look, to listen. Enough time to do some serious thinking about God and what he was doing with God. Enough time to do some serious thinking about what he would do with his new life, the new opportunity that God was giving him.

And what about us? Most of us have had it easy the past few weeks, so easy we might be tempted to do the easy thing and argue about whether we really need to stay at home or not. We've had it so easy we might be tempted to do the easy thing and go on living the way we were living before all this hit, even tempted to keep on in our sin as we were before. To be like that - What a waste

of COVID that would be. What a waste of Good Friday and Easter that would be.

Do you remember Rahm Emanuel, former mayor of Chicago? He had a great line that made the headlines - "Don't ever let a good crisis go to waste." Like most great lines, someone else thought of it before him - Winston Churchill, and before him Niccolo Machiavelli. "Don't ever let a good crisis go to waste." In the Bible, the writer to the Hebrews snagged some wise words from King Solomon and said something similar: "Do not make light of the Lord's discipline ... Endure hardship as discipline ... [Why? God is training us] to share in his holiness."

This time we're going through now, it's a gift from our loving Father. Don't let it go to waste. Moms and dads, don't let this time go to waste; use it to raise your children with Jesus. Husbands and wives, don't let this time go to waste; use it to help each other on the way to heaven. Friends, with whomever you have in your life, don't let this time go to waste; use this time to show them the love and the life of Jesus. If God wills, this time will come to an end, and we'll be getting back to life out in the world. Don't let this time go to waste. Use this time to grow closer to the Lord. Use this time to pray, to plan, to practice your new life with the Lord. Use this time, so that when we're back together, when we're back out in the world, we are ready to be a Chapter 3 Jonah, a Jonah living the new life God has for us, a Jonah living as a blessing from God.

You may be wondering - "What does Jonah have to do with Easter?" Good question. Jesus talked about the sign of Jonah - just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish and then God delivered him, so Jesus would be buried in the ground three days and then God would deliver him. We can take that a step further. Just as God gave Jonah a new life, just as God has given Jesus a new life, God has given you and me a new life. We know what Jonah did with his new life. We know what Jesus is doing with his new life. What will we do with our new lives?

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only, for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I with-hold.
Take my intellect and use
Every pow'r as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own;
It shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all, for thee.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

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 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.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

"Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"

Hymn 149

"Christ the Lord is ris'n today!"
Saints on earth and angels say;
Raise your joys and triumphs high;
Sing, O heav'ns, and earth, reply.

Love's redeeming work is done,
Fought the fight, the battle won;
Lo, our sun's eclipse is o'er;
Lo, he sets in blood no more.

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Christ has burst the gates of hell.
Death in vain forbids his rise;
Christ has opened paradise.

Lives again our glorious King!
Where, O Death, is now your sting?
Once he died our souls to save;
Where your victory, O grave?

Soar we now where Christ has led,
Foll'wing our exalted head.
Made like him, like him, we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies!

Hail the Lord of earth and heav'n!
Praise to you by both be giv'n!
God has now fulfilled his Word;
Praise the resurrected Lord!

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