

ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH



Picture courtesy of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

A Christian family who cares for you!

Welcome to historic Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

2901 N. Highland Ave., Tampa, FL. 33602

www.ZionLutheranTampa.com

813-228-8272 to leave message or for emergency call:

Rev. Kenneth Redmann, Pastor 941-457-7576 (cell)

revredmann@gmail.com

The Ascension of Our Lord May 17, 2026

The Ascended Lord Jesus Is with Us Always in His Church on Earth

After He rose from the dead, the Lord Jesus presented Himself alive to the apostles, “*appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God*” (Acts 1:3). When He ascended to the right hand of the Father, He did not orphan His Church, but He fills all things in heaven and on earth and gives gifts to His disciples. Even now, through His Church, He continues “*to do and teach*” (Acts 1:1), preaching “*repentance for the forgiveness of sins*” (Luke 24:47) even “*to the end of the earth*” (Acts 1:8). Though the cloud hid Jesus from the sight of His disciples then, and He remains hidden from sight even now, He remains with His people through His Gospel and Sacraments. He comes to us by the Word of His apostles, by the promise of His Father and by the power of the Holy Spirit, whom He pours out upon “*the church, which is his body*” (Eph. 1:22–23). In this holy Christian Church, we bless God and worship Christ with joy, for in His Church He blesses us with forgiveness, lifts us up in His hands and seats us with Himself “*in the heavenly places*” (Eph. 1:20).

The Preparation and Sharing the Peace

Please Stand

Hymn
hymnal)

We're Together Again (*located on the front inside cover of: This Far By Faith*)

Sharing the Peace

We joyfully greet one another in the name of the Lord, saying, "Peace be with you," as a sign of reconciliation and of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Matt. 5:22-24; Eph 4:1-3).

Be Seated

(Order of Worship is taken from Lutheran Service Book, Divine Service, Setting 3, pg 184)

Confession and Absolution

821 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

sts. 1-2



1 Al - le - lu - ia! Sing to Je - sus; His the
2 Al - le - lu - ia! Not as or - phans Are we



scep - ter, His the throne; Al - le - lu - ia! His the
left in sor - row now; Al - le - lu - ia! He is



tri - umph, His the vic - to - ry a - lone.
near us; Faith be - lieves, nor ques - tions how.



Hark! The songs of peace - ful Zi - on Thun - der
Though the cloud from sight re - ceived Him When the



like a might - y flood: "Je - sus out of
for - ty days were o'er, Shall our hearts for -



ev - 'ry na - tion Has re - deemed us by His blood."
get His prom - ise: "I am with you ev - er - more"?"

Text: William C. Dix, 1837-98, alt.
Tune: Rowland H. Prichard, 1811-87
Text and tune: Public domain

Please Stand

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

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

C Amen.

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth.

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Kneel/Stand

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

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Please Stand

Service of the Word

Psalm

Psalm 47

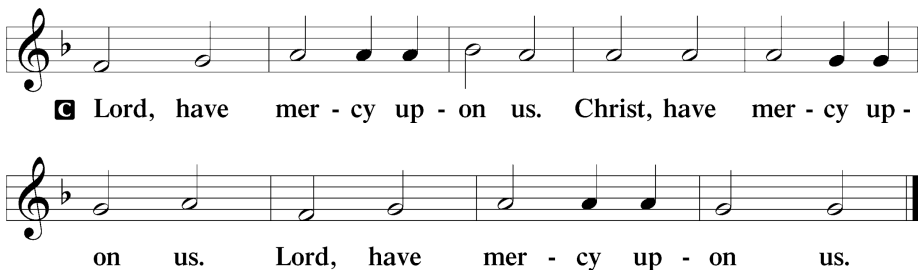


- ¹Clap your hands, all | peoples!*
- Shout to God with loud | songs of joy!
- ²For the LORD, the Most High, is | to be feared,*
- a great king over | all the earth.
- ³He subdued peoples | under us,*
- and nations un- | der our feet.
- ⁴He chose our heritage | for us,*
- the pride of Jacob | whom he loves.
- ⁵God has gone up | with a shout,*
- the LORD with the sound of a | trumpet.
- ⁶Sing praises to God, sing | praises!*
- Sing praises to our King, sing | praises!
- ⁷For God is the King of | all the earth,*
- sing praises | with a psalm!
- ⁸God reigns over the | nations;*
- God sits on his | holy throne.
- ⁹The princes of the peoples gather
- as the people of the God of | Abraham.*
- For the shields of the earth belong to God;
- he is highly ex- | alted!



Kyrie

Mark 10:47



C Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up -
on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

Gloria in Excelsis

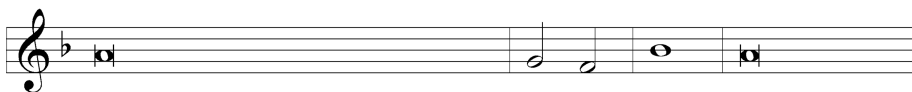
Luke 2:14; John 1:29



P Glory be to God on high: **C** and on earth peace, good - will toward
men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we wor - ship Thee,
we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee, for Thy great glory.
O Lord God, heav'n - ly King, God the Fa - ther Al - mighty.
O Lord, the only begotten Son, Je - sus Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy up - on us.



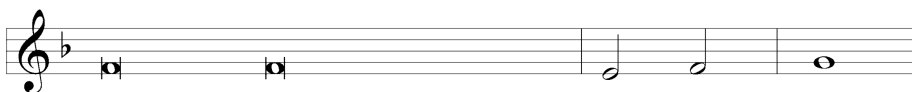
Thou that takest away the sin of the world, re-ceive our prayer.



Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy up-



on us. For Thou only art holy; Thou on-ly art the Lord.



Thou only, O Christ, with the Ho-ly Ghost,



art most high in the glory of God the Father. A-men.

Salutation and Collect of the Day



P The Lord be with you.



C And with thy spir-it.



P Let us pray.

P Almighty God, as Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, ascended into the heavens, so may we also ascend in heart and mind and continually dwell there with Him, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



First Reading

Acts 1:1–11

¹In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ²until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ⁹And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Epistle

Ephesians 1:15–23

¹⁵For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Please Stand

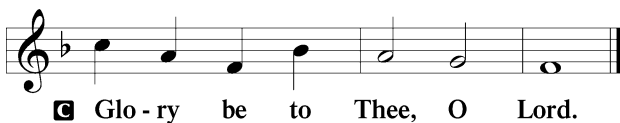
Alleluia



Holy Gospel

Luke 24:44-53

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the twenty-fourth chapter.



⁴⁴Then [Jesus] said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³and were continually in the temple blessing God.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.



Nicene Creed

**C I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
 the only-begotten Son of God,
 begotten of His Father before all worlds,
 God of God, Light of Light,
 very God of very God,
 begotten, not made,
 being of one substance with the Father,
 by whom all things were made;
 who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
 and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
 and was made man;
 and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
 He suffered and was buried.
 And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
 and ascended into heaven
 and sits at the right hand of the Father.
 And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
 whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the Lord and giver of life,
 who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
 who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
 who spoke by the prophets.
 And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
 I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
 and I look for the resurrection of the dead
 and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Be Seated

493 A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing

sts. 1-4



1	A	hymn	of	glo - ry	let	us	sing!	New
2	The	ho - ly	ap - os -	tol - ic	band			Up -
3	To	them	the	shin - ing	an - gels	cry,		“Why
4	“You	see	Him	now,	as -	cend - ing	high	Up



hymns through - out the world shall ring: Al - le - lu - ia,
 on the Mount of Ol - ives stand. Al - le - lu - ia,
 stand and gaze up - on the sky?" Al - le - lu - ia,
 to the por - tals of the sky." Al - le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia! Christ, by a road be - fore un -
 al - le - lu - ia! And with His faith - ful fol - l'wers
 al - le - lu - ia! "This is the Sav - ior," thus they
 al - le - lu - ia! "Here - af - ter Je - sus you shall



trod, As - cends un - to the throne of
 see Their Lord as - cend in maj - es -
 say; "This is His glo - rious tri - umph
 see Re - turn - ing in great maj - es -



God. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le -
 ty. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le -
 day!" Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le -
 ty." Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le -



lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
 lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
 lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
 lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Text: Bede, 673-735; tr. Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978, alt.
 Tune: Geistliche Kirchengesäng, 1623, Köln
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Sermon

Book II, The Sequel

Rev. Kenneth Redmann

Please Stand

Offertory

Psalm 51:10–12



C Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -
new a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a -
way from Thy pres-ence, and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it
from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of Thy sal - va -
tion, and up - hold me with Thy free spir-it. A - men.

Offering

When you come forward for Holy Communion, please place your tithes and gifts in the Offering plate at the front left pew.

Prayer of the Church

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

P: O Lord, You resist the proud and give grace to the humble. Grant us true humility after the likeness of Your Son, that we would never be arrogant or prideful and thus provoke Your wrath, but in all lowliness be made partakers of Your grace. Lord, in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: O God, You have provided pastors to preach Your Word, administer Your Sacraments and shepherd Your people. Guard them from leading Your sheep astray. Grant that, through their preaching, Your people may be pierced by the Law and saved by the Gospel. Bless, we pray, James and Kevin in their faithful desire to serve You as pastors

and be with Pastor Mitch as he considers reapplying for the colloquy program into the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Lord in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: O Lord, the source of all goodness, we thank You for leading James and Leona to pledge their love for one another through engagement to be married. Bless them as they prepare for their marriage. Grant that they may look forward to their wedding day with holy joy and experience there a foretaste of that bliss which You have prepared for all Your saints at the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end; Lord, in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Gracious Lord, have mercy on the sick and those in any need [*especially* _____]. Let the dawning light of the new creation in Christ sustain them in faith. In accord with Your will, grant them renewed health — a foretaste of their eternal healing in Him. Lord, in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; Lord, in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Almighty God, Your Son is both host and meal in the Sacrament of the Altar. Give us faith to recognize His body and blood and to receive with grateful faith this blessed food in Holy Communion. Guide us to live faithfully here on earth until we live forever with You. Lord, in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Lord God, heavenly Father, inasmuch as the adversary continually afflicts us and as a roaring lion walks about, seeking to devour us: We implore You for the sake of the suffering and death of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to help us by the grace of the Holy Spirit and to strengthen our hearts by Your Word, that our enemy may not prevail over us, but that we may evermore abide in Your grace and be preserved unto everlasting life; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

ALL: Amen.

Service of the Sacrament

Preface

2 Timothy 4:22; [Colossians 3:1]; [Psalm 136]



P The Lord be with you.



C And with thy spir - it.



P Lift up your hearts.



C We lift them up un - to the Lord.



P Let us give thanks un - to the Lord, our God.



C It is meet and right so to do.

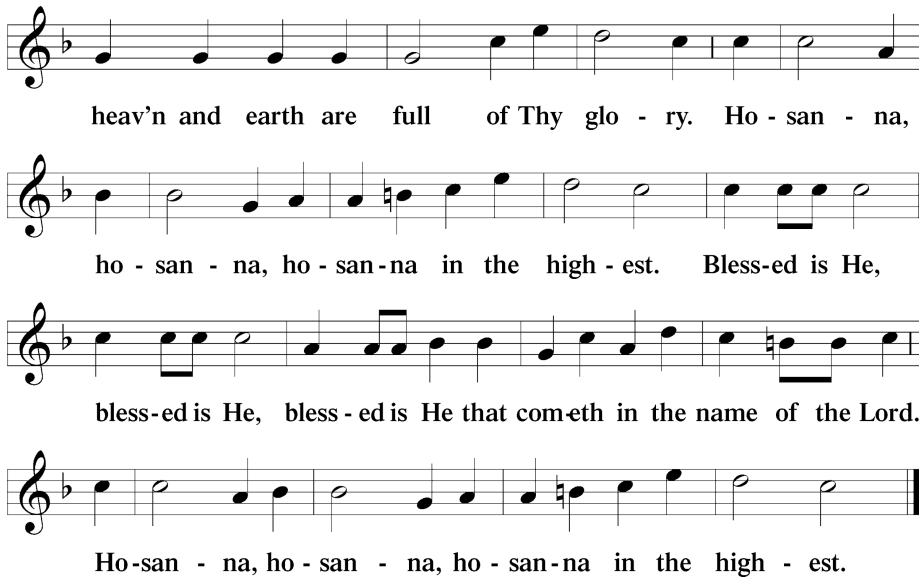
P It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who after His resurrection appeared openly to all His disciples and in their sight was taken up into heaven that He might make us partakers of His divine life. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and singing:

Sanctus

Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9



C Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth;



heav'n and earth are full of Thy glo - ry. Ho - san - na,
 ho - san - na, ho - san-na in the high - est. Bless-ed is He,
 bless-ed is He, bless - ed is He that com-eth in the name of the Lord.
 Ho-san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san-na in the high - est.

Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

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.

The Words of Our Lord *Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–25*

P Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take, eat; this is My T body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.”

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My T blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

Pax Domini

John 20:19



P The peace of the Lord be with you al - ways.



C A - men.

Agnus Dei

John 1:29



O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the



world, have mer - cy up - on us. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that



tak - est a-way the sin of the world, have mer - cy up - on us.



O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the



Be Seated

618 I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table

sts. 1, ref, 4



Text: Friedrich Christian Heyder, 1677–1754; tr: The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941, abr.
 Tune: Emskirchner Choral-Buch, 1756, Leipzig
 Text: © 1941 Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110000932
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Distribution

The pastor distributes the body and blood of Christ to those who come to receive, saying:

Take, eat; this is the true body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, given into death for your sins.

Amen.

Take, drink; this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for the forgiveness of your sins.

Amen.

In dismissing the communicants, the following is said:

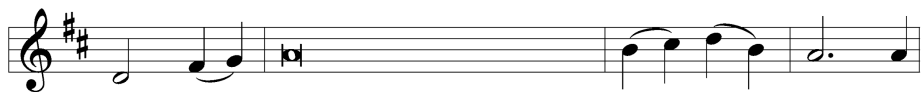
P The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. Depart T in peace.

C Amen.

Please Stand

Nunc Dimittis

Luke 2:29-32




Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant de - part in peace ac-




cord - ing to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,



which Thou hast pre - pared be - fore the face of all people,



a light to light - en the Gen - tiles and the glo - ry of Thy



peo - ple Is - ra - el. Glo - ry be to the Father and



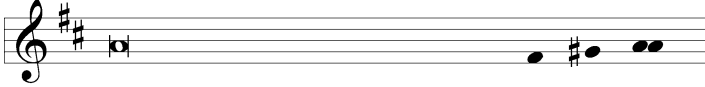
to the Son and to the Ho - ly Ghost; as it was in the beginning,



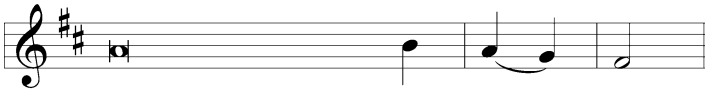
is now, and ev - er shall be, world with - out end. A - men.

Thanksgiving

Psalm 107:1



A O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,



C and His mercy endureth for - ev - er.

A Let us pray.

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.



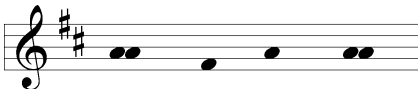
P The Lord be with you.



C And with thy spir - it.

Benedicamus

Psalm 103:1



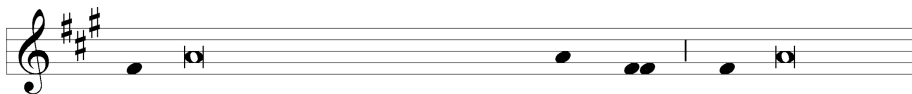
A Bless we the Lord.



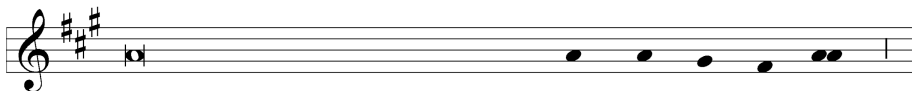
C Thanks be to God.

Benediction

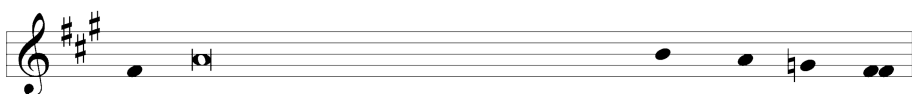
Numbers 6:24-26



P The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make



His face shine upon you and be gra - cious un - to you.



The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and † give you peace.



C A-men, a-men, a - men.

Be Seated

493 A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing

sts. 5-6



5 Be now our joy on earth, O Lord, And
△ 6 O ris - en Christ, as - cend - ed Lord, All



be our fu - ture great re - ward. Al - le - lu - ia,
praise to You let earth ac - cord: Al - le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia! Then, throned with You for - ev - er,
al - le - lu - ia! You are, while end - less a - ges

we run, Shall praise Your name e - ter - nal - ly. one. With Fa - ther and with Spir - it Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Text: Bede, 673-735; tr. Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978, alt.
 Tune: Geistliche Kirchengesäng, 1623, Köln
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The Promise of our Lord:

²⁰Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, (or imagine) according to the power that worketh in us, ²¹Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Eph 3:20-21 KJV).

Thank you!
We are so blessed to have you worship with us!

CALENDAR of MINISTRY EVENTS:

May	Sun	17	8:00am Divine Service with Holy Communion 9:15am Bible Study "How We Got the Bible" video series 10:00am We adjourn to serve and love our neighbors
	Mon	18	11:00am (tentatively) Pastor Redmann and Pastor Mitch 1-6:30pm Office hours*** 7:00pm Bible Study, verse by verse in Matthew with James Halfacer
	Tues	19	7:00pm ZOOM with Eric Stahlberg, Exec. Dir., FL/GA District for Missions and Outreach
	Thur	21	9-noon Tampa Pastors Circuit Winkel at Messiah, Carrollwood 2-6:30pm Office hours***

***Please call or text Pastor to let you in the building

UPCOMING MINISTRY EVENTS:

May	Sun	24	8:00am Divine Service with Holy Communion 9:15am Bible Study “How We Got the Bible” video series 10:00am We adjourn to serve and love our neighbors
	Mon	25	11:00am (tentatively) Pastor Redmann and Pastor Mitch 1-6:30pm Office hours*** 7:00pm Bible Study, verse by verse in Matthew with James Halfacer
	Thur	28	2-6:30pm Office hours***

***Please call or text Pastor to let you in the building

Acknowledgments

Divine Service, Setting Three from Lutheran Service Book

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Lutherans for Life

May 14kk (The Ascension of Our Lord) – In the Ascension of Christ, we behold the fulfillment of Psalm 47:5, “God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.” Knowing that the Lord Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God (Ephesians 1:20), where He rules all things for the good of His Church, gives us great comfort and assurance as we continue to advocate for those whose voices are being silenced by abortion. There will be a day of reckoning, when the Lord Jesus returns with the clouds in the same way as He once ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11). We thank God for the hope to which He has called us and pray for His Spirit of wisdom and enlightenment (Ephesians 1:17-18), that we may continue to speak the truth in love and call people to repentance, that they might receive the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ our Lord (Luke 24:46-47).

We’re Together Again

We’re together again...

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Praising the Lord...

¹⁸ Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the

Lord (Psalm 102:18).

in one accord...

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ (I Corinthians 12:12).

Something good is gonna happen...

²⁸Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

Something good is in store...

¹⁶The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? (I Corinthians 10:16).

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The RICHES of our Liturgy • The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

What do the parts of the liturgy mean? This is a frequently asked question; maybe you have asked that question yourself. The following descriptions of worship and the parts of liturgy were first published in an article by the former Commission on Worship for the Reporter Insert entitled “Taking a Tour of Heaven.”

*Worship is like no place else in this world.
But there is one place that it does resemble, and that is heaven*

Benediction

“The Lord bless you and keep you.”

Recall again the words of Jesus in the parable of the sheep and the goats: “Come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom.”

The blessing that God speaks to us in the Benediction prepares us for that final summons.

Throughout the Divine Service, God is forming us in his likeness as he establishes in us a deeper and more lasting faith toward him and a persistent and steadfast love for one another.

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

In their reports of Jesus' Transfiguration, the evangelists tell us that Jesus shone more brightly than the sun, prompting Peter to say, “Lord, it is good for us to be here.”

In heaven we will have the same response because it will be good — very good — to be in the presence of the Light of the world.

For the moment, we see only dimly, but then we will see face to face. Still, it is good to be here even now, in this heaven on earth that we call worship, for already here God showers us with his grace.

“The Lord lift up his countenance on you and give you peace.”

We Christians are truly blessed in that God does not hide his face from us. In all other religions there is ultimately doubt as to their gods' attitudes toward them.

How can it be otherwise, given that their gods are the creation of their own imaginations? But ours is the creator of heaven and earth.

To be sure, he is a stern judge who holds the sinner accountable. But in the person of his only Son, we see our Father's true nature, his fatherly heart of love. That is the countenance that he lifts up toward us in his holy Word and Sacraments as he reveals his mercy and grace.

Where the Lord blesses and makes his face shine and lifts up his gracious countenance on us, there is peace. Not the peace of this world, but peace between God and his faithful people.

We know that peace because even now, in Word and Sacraments, we have Jesus and all his benefits. And in heaven we will rest in his eternal peace.

