

Family Friendly Devotions for the upcoming weeks of social distancing

The office of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin has provided an 8-week schedule for daily scripture reading. You are invited to do the following each day. (You might want to begin with week 5; this was dated March 16th.)

- **SHARE** your highs and lows: What was the best thing that happened to you today? the worst? You can share more than one good or bad thing; this is about connecting with one another and talking about your day.
- **READ** the suggested Bible verses. What did you hear in the story? What was your favorite part? How does this story show God's love?
- **TALK** about how the Bible reading might relate to your highs and lows. Listen for how God cares for those in the story and how they respond to God and even thank God! How can *you* respond to God? What are some things you want to say "thank you" for to God?
- **PRAY** for one another's highs and lows. Pray with one another and for one another. Pray that each of you may learn to listen to God when God is guiding you.
- **BLESS** one another. Trace the sign of the cross on one another's foreheads and say, "(NAME), you are a child of God" or "You are known and loved by God", or you can make up something new each night. What are different ways you can bless one another and remind yourselves that you are protected by God?
- For more information, visit <http://faith5.org>

WEEK	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	Psalms 46	Psalms 100	Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18	Psalms 23	Matthew 6:5-15	John 1:1-9	John 9:1-41
2	Psalms 118	Psalms 27	Exodus 3:1-12	Exodus 3:13-22	Exodus 4:1-17	Exodus 4:18-31	John 11:1-45
3	Psalms 121	Psalms 40	Exodus 16:4-5, 9-18	Philippians 1:1-11	Psalms 44	1 Kings 17:7-16	Matthew 26:14-27:66
4	Psalms 130	Luke 1:46-56	Hebrews 12:1-3	John 13: 1-17, 31b-35	Psalms 22	Mark 16:1	Matthew 28:1-10
5	Psalms 67	Exodus 15:1b-18	Genesis 9:13-16	Isaiah 55:1-11	Psalms 16	Exodus 10:1-10	John 20:19-31
6	Psalms 80	Psalms 95	Jonah 2:1-10***	Psalms 98	Psalms 2: 14a, 22-32	Acts 2: 14a, 36-41	Luke 24:13-35
7	Psalms 85	Psalms 103	Acts 16: 12-15, 40	Acts 2:1-13	Galatians 5:22-26	Matthew 7:24-27	John 10:1-10
8	Psalms 126	Luke 2: 29-32	Matthew 20:24-28	Acts 2:42-47	Revelation 21:1-6	Psalms 136	John 14:1-14

*** On Wednesday of Week 6, you may want to read the whole book of Jonah.

Reflections on Faith and Life for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, 2020

“I am the light of the world,” Jesus said. “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). “In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... In him was life, and that life was the light of the world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:1-4).

I hope you are walking in the light and love of Jesus now, as we continue our “distancing” with no certainty of when it will end. There’s a line from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: “The time is out of joint; O curs-ed spite, that ever I was born to set it right.” It certainly seems as if everything is “out of joint.” But what an opportunity for the whole world to learn that there are bigger issues than politics and war!

Steve Garnaas-Holmes’ *Unfolding Light* for April 3rd begins with a quote from I Corinthians 12:15; I’m moved by his insights:

If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.

Now we are beginning to understand we are one body. We are all dependent and intertwined with so many, even far away. A stranger’s hand-washing is my health, a worker’s delivery is my life. The well-being of my neighbor is my well-being. I love my neighbor as myself—not just as much as myself, but as if s/he were the rest of my self.

Blessed Oneness, Divine Wholeness, bless our unity, that in it as readily as we spread disease we may spread love. Give us your compassion to care for the least, for what we do to them we do to you, and to ourselves. May we trust the global impact of our individual actions. May your one Spirit bring together our one humanity. You who are the One, may we be one. Bless our one holy, ailing body with your mercy and your grace.

To all of you who have mailed or dropped off your offering envelopes, many thanks! To all who have called and kept in touch, your thoughtfulness is much appreciated. To all who are reaching out to neighbors and shut-ins, thank you for your ministry.

During this Holy Week, may you be filled and overwhelmed with the depth of God’s mercy and his undying love.

Maundy Thursday, 2020 (COVID-19) –A simple worship service

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Confession of Sins: **Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a troubled and penitent sinner, confess to you all my sins and iniquities with which I have offended you, and for which I justly deserve your punishment. I am sorry for them, and repent of them, and pray for your boundless mercy. For the sake of the suffering and death of your Son, Jesus Christ, be gracious and merciful to me, a poor sinful being. Forgive my sins, give me your Holy Spirit for amendment of my sinful life, and bring me to life everlasting. Amen.**

Receive the words of absolution: God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved! In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. May Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Hymn *All Glory, Laud, and Honor* LBW 108, ELW 344

Prayer of the Day: 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. As he was servant of all, give us the will to serve others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hymn *Chief of Sinners though I Be* (vv. 1,2) LBW 306, ELW 609

A reading from Exodus, 12:1-14

A reading from I Corinthians, 11:23-26

The Holy Gospel according to John, the 13th Chapter (John 13:1-1-17, 31b-35)
The sermon begins with this gospel. Please read that now.

Hymn *Chief of Sinners though I Be* (vv. 4,5) LBW 306, ELW 609

The Apostles' Creed: God has made us his beloved children through our baptism into Christ. Despite the distancing required at this time, we confess our faith as part of the body of Christ, the communion of saints, the fellowship of believers:
I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. **Amen.**

Prayers of the Church: Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all people according to their needs:

God of love, unite your church in its commitment to humble service. Make us your faithful disciples. Speak words of truth and grace through us. Encourage us in self-giving acts of kindness. Let us love one another as you have loved us. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of plenty, send your grace on all who care for flocks and fields. As the world lives in uncertainty, guide the hands of all who cultivate, farm, and garden. Let the earth flourish so that all may eat and be satisfied. Provide for those who do not have enough to eat, those who are unemployed, those whose livelihood has been lost; and give generous hearts to all of us who can share. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, you give us a new commandment, to have love for one another.

In this time when most of us feel helpless, we give thanks for organizations and agencies that respond to disasters, and for all healthcare workers serving selflessly to provide care and comfort for those who suffer any kind of illness. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of wisdom, unite all people on this troubled earth. May we join together as never before in our efforts to defeat the deadly coronavirus. May weapons be turned into ventilators, and desire for power into compassion for all. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer (use the words that speak to your heart)

Hymn

Go to Dark Gethsemane (vv. 1,2) LBW 109, ELW 347

There is no benediction for this service. Worship continues tomorrow, Good Friday. I invite you to keep a moment of silence now to just be still and know that God is God (Psalm 46, v. 11).

Maundy Thursday, April 9, 2020

(John 13:1-17, 31b-35; I Cor 11:23-26; Ex 12:1-14; Ps 116:1-2, 12-19)

The Holy Gospel according to John the 13th chapter: **(Glory to you, O Lord!)**

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. Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God. And during supper he 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 [singular] 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 [plural] 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, put on his robe, and 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, blessed are you if you do them. . . ."

"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."

This is the gospel of the Lord. **(Praise to you, O Christ!)**

The scene in tonight's gospel is familiar; we know it well. It's the story of Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples. It's the beginning of our own sacrament of holy communion. But John, in his gospel, treats the meal differently than Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

In John's story, Jesus prepares his disciples to receive a *new commandment*. The commandment is *love*, and the preparation is *humility*: the humility of *receiving* an intimate, personal service, and the humility of being willing to *offer* such a service to others.

As so often happens in the gospels, Peter might be the spokesman for us all. I invite you to put yourself in his place tonight, to try to imagine what it would feel like to be having *his* conversation *with Jesus*, to be face to face with our Lord.

We've all experienced what Peter feels here: he's *astonished*, then *ashamed*, and finally *afraid*. Strong emotions, enough to *upset* Peter—maybe even enough to *begin to change* him.

Peter is *astonished*. “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Only a *gentile slave* would be asked to wash the dirt and grime from feet that have walked from Galilee to Jerusalem. Peter can't believe his *Lord*, his rabbi, the man he's followed for three years, would stoop to wash his feet—that wasn't the way his world operated. If anything, *Peter* should be washing *Jesus*' feet!

Imagine yourself in Peter's place. Hear yourself saying to Jesus, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

Then Peter is *ashamed*. “*You* will never wash *my* feet!” Filthy as his feet are, they're *nothing* compared to the waywardness of his heart! The disciples have come to know Jesus during the last three years. Jesus is pure and holy. And *they* are *not*. And now Jesus, his Lord and Master, wants to *wash his feet*? How could Peter allow him to stoop so low, literally or figuratively?

Imagine yourself in Peter's place. Hear yourself saying to Jesus, “You will never wash my feet!” Bring to the forefront of your mind some of the “dirt and grime” of your own life, things you'd be ashamed to have Jesus wash off:

The times you said “Later” or “In a minute” to your spouse, your child, or your parent, and never got around to it. . . .

The times you walked away from feelings you hurt without stopping to explain, or apologize, or listen to the pain you caused....

The times you turned the page in the newspaper, choosing to ignore a physical or social problem—something you might have been able to alleviate by sending a donation, or praying, or emailing your congressman. . . .

The times you took the name of the Lord in vain, or failed to honor the Sabbath. . . .

The times you walked away from worship and immediately forgot that being a follower of Christ is an all-the-time thing.

In silence now, lift up your own shames before Jesus. . . .

Finally, Peter is *afraid*. “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!” Imagine yourself in Peter’s place. Jesus has told you he can make you clean by washing you, but he’s only going to wash your dirty feet.

And you’re afraid he might miss something vital, something that could be the difference between life and death! Is it really enough for him to wash *only* your feet?

But Jesus says it *is* enough, and he should know. It’s *his* precious blood that’s going to cover all the sinfulness you’ve tried to cover up. He’ll even cover all the sins you’ve been unaware of.

How hard it is for us to trust! Jesus says, “Your sins are forgiven,” and we say, “Thank you, Lord!” and continue to carry our guilt along with us.

Jesus says, “Remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age,” and we keep trying to be good enough on our own, to *make ourselves* better, not letting Jesus wash us clean and transform us.

Do you trust Jesus? Do you really believe what he says? Are you willing to give up *yourself* to follow him?

Tonight we remember Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples. They were celebrating deliverance from a *physical* bondage, when Moses led the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt. But we’re celebrating something much more than that! When we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we thank God for freeing us from bondage to sin and death through the sacrifice and love of Jesus.

We thank God we don't have to be *astonished*, like Peter, astonished by the goodness and mercy of Jesus, because we experience it personally day after day. We thank God we don't have to be *ashamed*, like Peter, ashamed of the uncleanness of our heart, or the sinfulness of our nature, because Jesus knows and loves us *as we are*—and *because* he loves us, he's unwilling to leave us that way.

We thank God we don't have to be *afraid*, like Peter, afraid of losing his love or our salvation, because by the power of his Holy Spirit he's already begun transforming us into his own likeness.

We thank God because he first loved us, so now we can love one another, caring for each other as Jesus did for his disciples, stooping to wash feet, serving and accepting one another in the name of Christ—in the name of Jesus, who gave us his own body and blood so that we might live forever in him.

We thank God because in the midst of the coronavirus, we can trust in his sacrificial love, the un-dying love that can't be conquered even by death. *Love* is what matters; it's the point of everything. We sacrifice, for ourselves and for others, the usual evening service for this Maundy Thursday, with its comforting sacrament of Holy Communion, the body and blood of Christ our Lord.

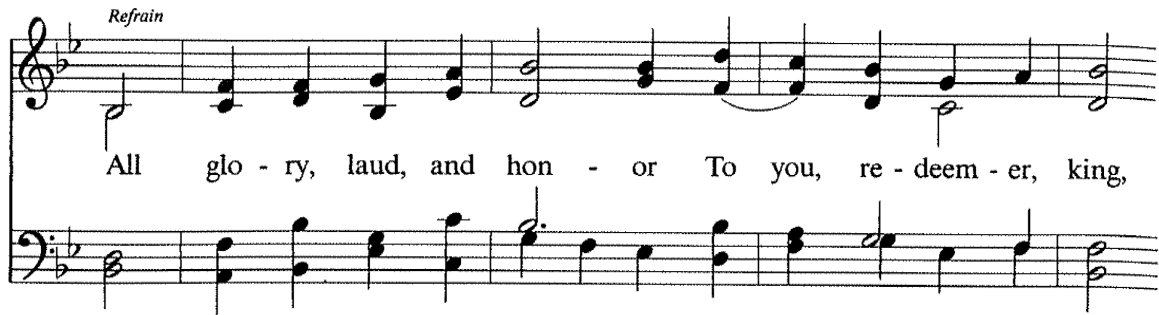
We sacrifice the stripping of the altar, and Friday's stark, naked setting where we're reminded of the grimness of his undying death. We sacrifice the physical closeness of family and friends, knowing that through this amazing love we are more closely connected than if we were present together for Good Friday. And on Sunday, we'll remember that the empty tomb surrounds all of us as we sacrifice filled sanctuaries out of love.

Thanks be to God!

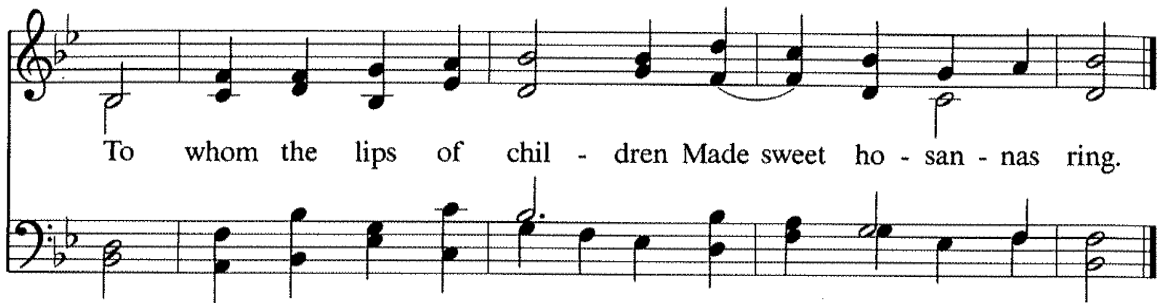
Please continue with the Hymn of the Day, Chief of Sinners though I Be, verses 4-5, followed by the Creed.

All Glory, Laud, and Honor

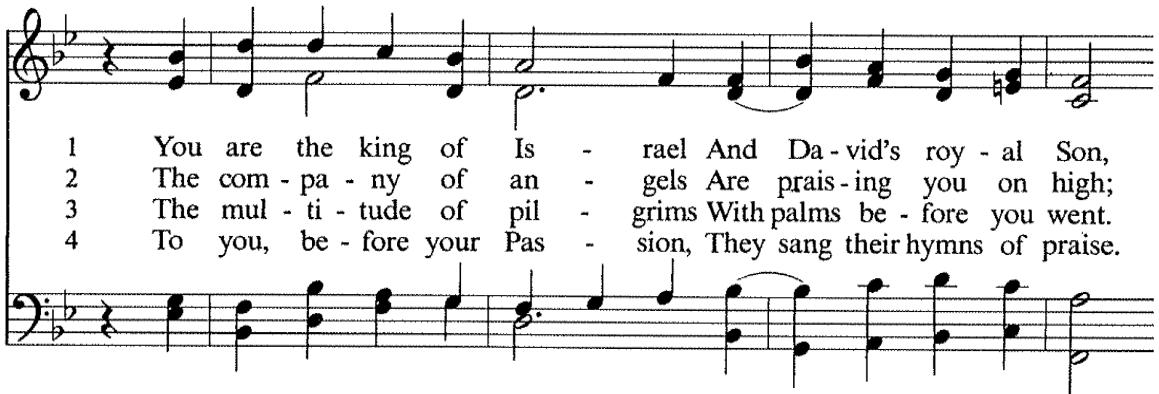
Refrain



All glo - ry, laud, and hon - or To you, re - deem - er, king,

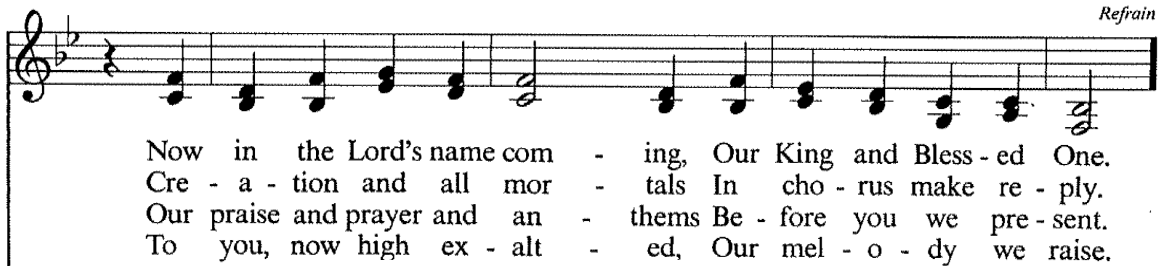


To whom the lips of chil - dren Made sweet ho - san - nas ring.



1 You are the king of Is - rael And Da - vid's roy - al Son,
 2 The com - pa - ny of an - gels Are prais - ing you on high;
 3 The mul - ti - tude of pil - grims With palms be - fore you went.
 4 To you, be - fore your Pas - sion, They sang their hymns of praise.

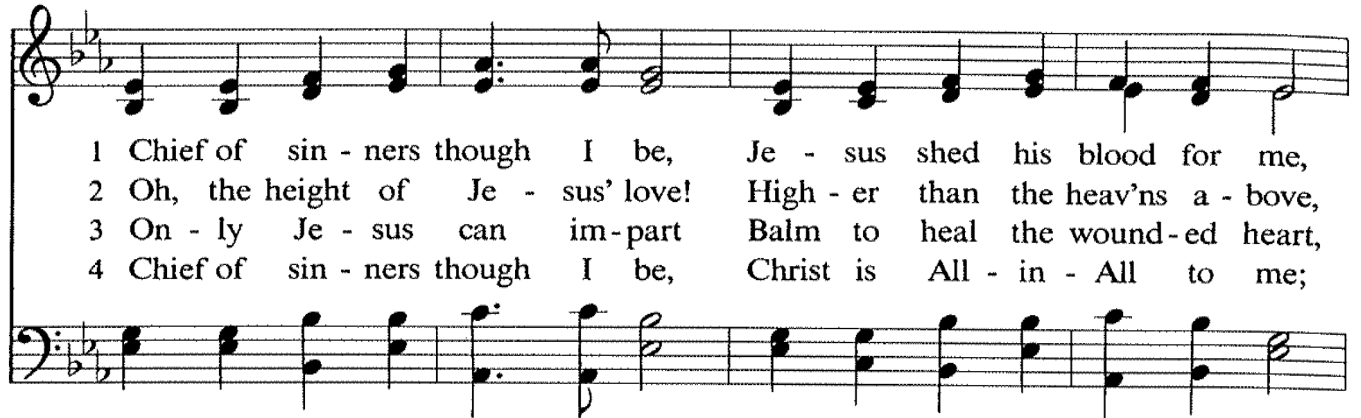
Refrain



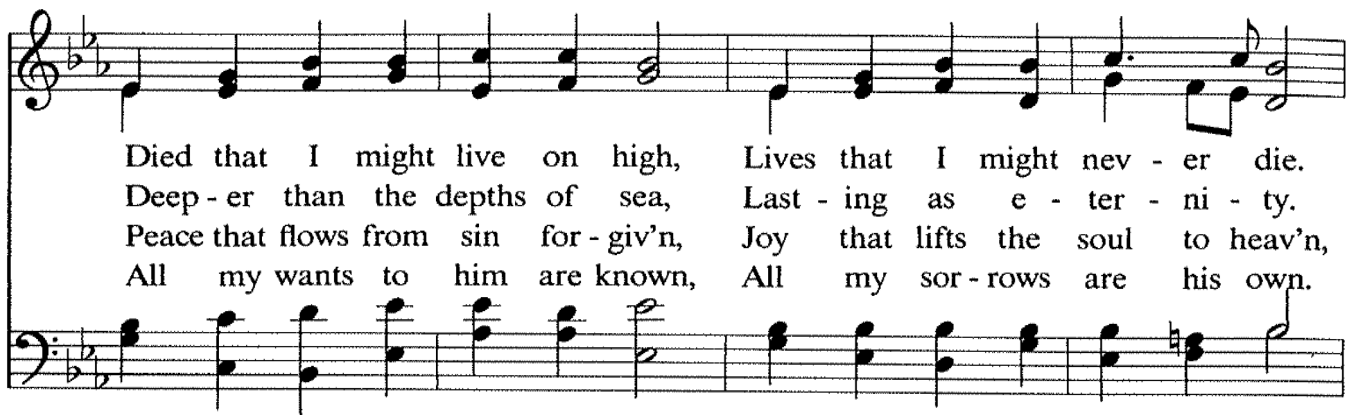
Now in the Lord's name com - ing, Our King and Bless - ed One.
 Cre - a - tion and all mor - tals In cho - rus make re - ply.
 Our praise and prayer and an - thems Be - fore you we pre - sent.
 To you, now high ex - alt - ed, Our mel - o - dy we raise.

- 5 Their praises you accepted;
 Accept the prayers we bring,
 Great author of all goodness,
 O good and gracious King. *Refrain*

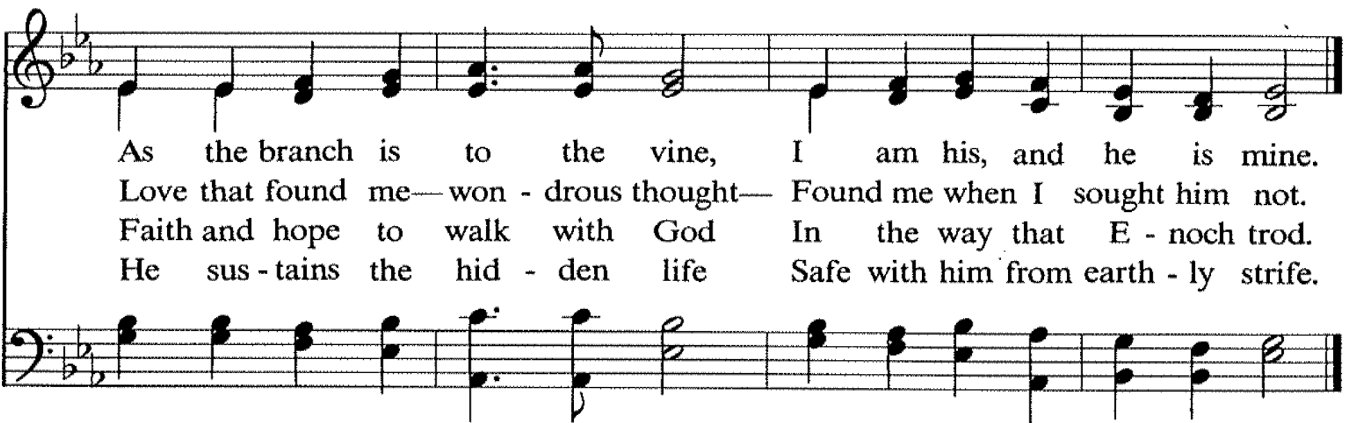
Chief of Sinners though I Be



1 Chief of sin - ners though I be, Je - sus shed his blood for me,
 2 Oh, the height of Je - sus' love! High - er than the heav'ns a - bove,
 3 On - ly Je - sus can im - part Balm to heal the wound - ed heart,
 4 Chief of sin - ners though I be, Christ is All - in - All to me;



Died that I might live on high, Lives that I might nev - er die.
 Deep - er than the depths of sea, Last - ing as e - ter - ni - ty.
 Peace that flows from sin for - giv'n, Joy that lifts the soul to heav'n,
 All my wants to him are known, All my sor - rows are his own.



As the branch is to the vine, I am his, and he is mine.
 Love that found me—won - drous thought— Found me when I sought him not.
 Faith and hope to walk with God In the way that E - noch trod.
 He sus - tains the hid - den life Safe with him from earth - ly strife.

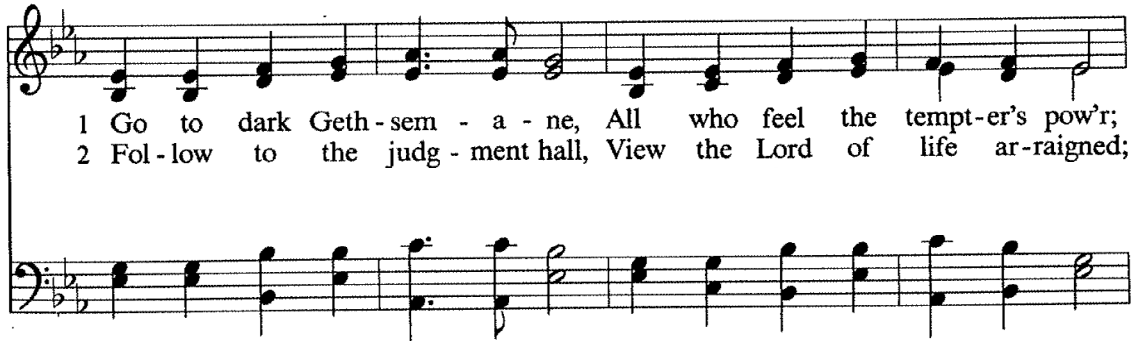
5 O my Savior, help afford
 By your Spirit and your Word!
 When my wayward heart would stray,
 Keep me in the narrow way;
 Grace in time of need supply
 While I live and when I die.

*Text: William McComb, 1793-c. 1870
 Tune: Richard Redhead, 1820-1901*

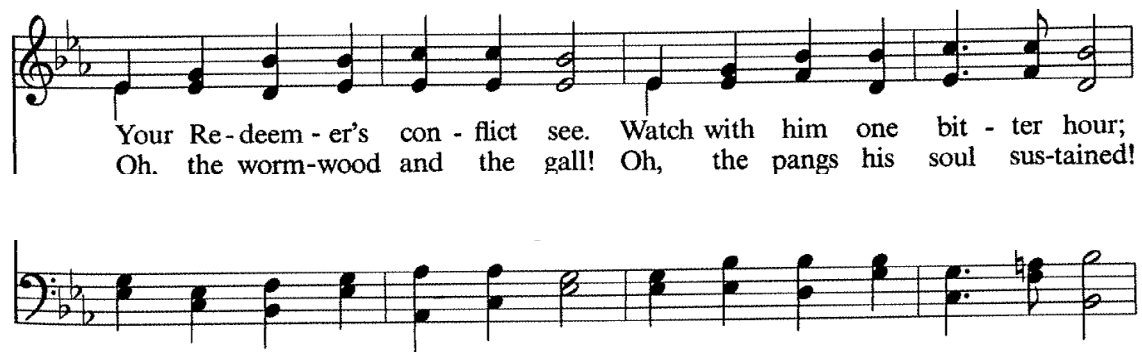
Go to Dark Gethsemane

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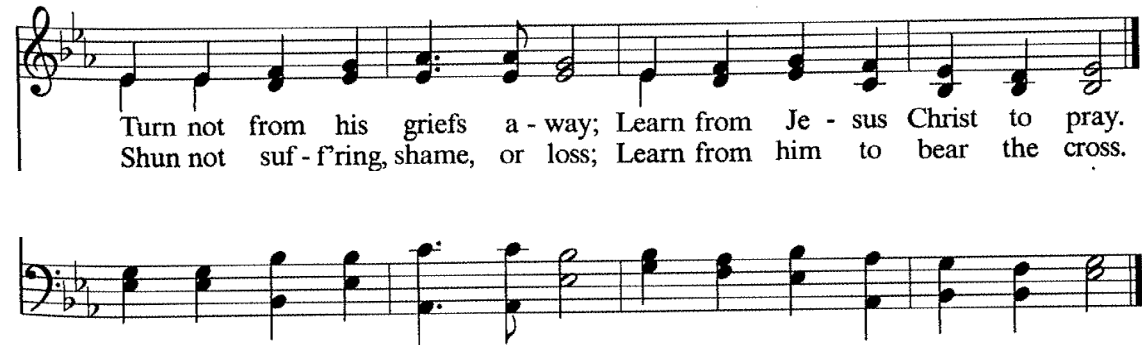
1 Go to dark Geth - sem - a - ne, All who feel the tempt - er's pow'r;
2 Fol - low to the judg - ment hall, View the Lord of life ar-raigned;



Your Re - deem - er's con - flict see. Watch with him one bit - ter hour;
Oh, the worm-wood and the gall! Oh, the pangs his soul sus-tained!



Turn not from his griefs a - way; Learn from Je - sus Christ to pray.
Shun not suf - f'ring, shame, or loss; Learn from him to bear the cross.



*Text: James Montgomery, 1771-1854
Tune: Richard Redhead, 1820-1901*

GETHSEMANE
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