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## ORDER OF WORSHIP

**Easter 6, May 17, 2020** (John 14:15-27; Ps 66:8-20; Acts 17:22-31; I Peter 3:13-22)

**Call to Worship (Psalm 66:8-20)** The Psalmist promises to bring offerings to the Temple because the Lord has brought the people through a period of testing. We are still in the midst of our “coronavirus testing,” and we can’t see the end clearly. Can you follow the Psalmist in praising God? Remember that the trials and “testing” the Israelites endured included their Exodus experiences (when they were in slavery), and the Exile experiences (when they were kidnapped to Babylon).-- Read responsively by *whole* verse.

**Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard.**

He has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.

**For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver.**

You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs.

**You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.**

I will come to your temple with burnt offerings and fulfill my vows to you,  
**vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble.**

I will sacrifice fat animals to you and an offering of rams; I will offer bulls and goats.

**Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.\*\***

I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue.

**If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;**

But God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer.

**Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!**

\*\*This is *evangelism*: telling others what God has done for you; he *listened* and *heard*.

## **Confession of Sins**

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

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the aid of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy spirit so that, attentive to your word, we may confess our sins, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another [*or, if you are alone, say “in the presence of God and in unity with the whole Christian Church”*]

**Gracious God, have mercy on us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Pronouncement of Forgiveness**

May our Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

**Opening Hymn**

558

**Lord God, We Praise You**

The musical score is written for a choir in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The lyrics are as follows:

1 Lord God, we praise you, now the night is o - ver, ac - tive and  
2 Mon - arch of all things, fit us for your man - sions; ban - ish our  
3 All - ho - ly Fa - ther, Son, and e - qual Spir - it, Trin - i - ty

watch - ful, stand - ing here be - fore you; sing - ing, we of - fer  
weak - ness, health and whole - ness send - ing; bring us to heav - en,  
bless - ed, send us your sal - va - tion; yours is the glo - ry,

prayer and med - i - ta - tion; thus we a - dore you.  
where your saints u - nit - ed joy with - out end - ing.  
gleam - ing and re - sound - ing through all cre - a - tion.

Text: attr. Gregory I, 540-604; tr. composite  
Music: Paris Antiphoner, 1681

CHRISTE SANCTORUM  
11 11 11 3

**The Kyrie** (“Kyrie” means “Lord”)

In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For this holy place where we worship, and for all in Christ’s body who offer now their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn of Praise

*Beautiful Savior, King of creation, Son of God and Son of Man!  
Truly I'd love thee, truly I'd serve thee, light of my soul, my joy, my crown.*

*Fair are the meadows, fair are the woodlands, robed in flow'rs of blooming  
spring;  
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer, He makes our sorrowing spirit sing.*

*Fair is the sunshine, fair is the moonlight, bright the sparkling stars on high;  
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer than all the angels in the sky.*

*Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations, Son of God and Son of man!  
Glory and honor, praise, adoration, Now and forevermore be thine!*

**Prayer of the Day:** Almighty and ever-living God, you hold together all things in heaven and on earth. In your great mercy receive the prayers of all your children, and give to all the world the Spirit of your truth and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Notes on the reading from Acts:** When Paul arrived in Athens, he was greatly distressed. Everywhere he looked there were altars to gods and goddesses: gods of moon, sun, stars, history, mythic characters, war, peace, rain, water, healing, death, modesty, rumor, impulse, and victory—to name a few! The Athenians wanted to be sure that any god out there was acknowledged. (An ancient proverb said there were more “gods”—that is, idols—in Athens than there were men!) On one altar was written: **TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.**

The most important temple in Athens was the Parthenon (PAR-then-on), atop the Acropolis, the most holy hill in Athens. A short distance away was a meeting place called the Areopagus (air-ee-AH-pa-gus), where educated men and women discussed issues of philosophy, including theology (god-talk). It was considered an honor to be allowed to speak at the Areopagus. Note that Paul attempts to show them the one true God not by confrontation, but by understanding where they are in their own thinking, and then engaging them in conversation.

A reading from Acts, the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter (17:22-31)

Paul stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said, “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: **TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.** You are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything it is the

Lord of heaven and earth. He does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him, and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. *“For in him we live and move and have our being.”* As some of your own poets have said, *“We are his offspring.”* Therefore, since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. And he has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.” -- The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!

Notes on the reading from First Peter: Consider these questions: how does your faith help you determine what’s right? How does your faith give you courage when doing what’s right brings you suffering? The early Christians were called to be steadfast in serving their neighbors; working for peace; and suffering in love even when living out their identity in Christ put them in opposition to the culture around them. Today, in the midst of COVID-19, people of faith are still at odds with the injustices that cause some to suffer while others are enriched. But we have hope, because the love that raised Jesus from the dead is stronger than the hate and fear we might have to face.

A reading from I Peter, the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter (3:13-22) (Today’s New International Version)

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened” (Isaiah 8:12). But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. In that state he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.\*\* In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand\*\*\*—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!

\*\*Think of the Apostle’s Creed, where we say, “He descended into hell/to the dead.”

\*\*\*Think of the Creed; “He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

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**Introduction to the Gospel** (say it in your outside voice!) **Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

The holy gospel according to John, the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter (15-27). **Glory to you, O Lord!**

During his Last Supper with his disciples, the Passover meal, Jesus said, **“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. Before long the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Those who have my commands and keep them are the ones who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them . . .”**

**Those who love me will obey my teaching, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”**

This is the gospel of our Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

### **Sermon**

How does the Bible interact with our daily lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, two to three thousand years after it was written? How are we supposed to understand words recorded in languages so totally different we can't even read their alphabets? words written in a cultural and religious context completely foreign and often impossible for us to comprehend?

The reading from Acts shows us the Apostle Paul doing his apostolic work, on a preaching tour around the Mediterranean. (Note: the word “apostle” means “one who is sent.”) His travels have brought him to Athens, a city abounding with shrines to various gods. The most important temple in the city was the Parthenon, dedicated to Athena, the goddess who supposedly watched over Athens.

The Parthenon was located atop the Acropolis, the most holy hill in Athens. Just a stone's throw down the hill was a meeting place called the Areopagus. There enlightened men and women discussed issues of philosophy, including theology—god-talk. It was an honor to be allowed to speak at the Areopagus.

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Paul was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. He'd been preaching in the synagogue and the marketplace, telling the good news of Jesus and the resurrection—and those who heard him invited him to the Areopagus to explain his *strange ideas*.

Look again at what Paul said: **Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What you worship as something unknown, I am going to proclaim (and explain!) to you.**

The Greeks worshiped every sort of god they could imagine—if they could imagine it, they created a god for it. And that was all it was: an imagined “divine” being created of gold or silver, stone or wood—an image made by human design and skill. A “graven” image which they worshiped. (Note: In Exodus 20, the First Commandment is followed by two verses about the worship of images or idols. Some denominations count these two verses as the Second Commandment; they then combine the Ninth and Tenth Commandments,)

In their polytheism—their worship of *multiple* gods—they'd established an altar *to an unknown god*, just to cover all their bases. In case they'd missed a deity, they wanted him or her to know that they still acknowledged him or her. No god or goddess could accuse them of not trying to be faithful in worship.

Paul pointed out that there was indeed a God unknown to them, and that *this* God was the only God: a God **who had made the world and everything in it** and was **the Lord of heaven and earth; a god who didn't live in temples—or altars or images—made by human hands**. This God was the creator and sustainer of every living thing; Paul quoted Epimenides, (a philosopher from Crete), saying, **“in him we live and move and have our being.”**

Romans 8:28 is one of my favorite scripture verses: ***In all things God works for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purposes.*** You might call this the “silver lining” of the black cloud of the coronavirus—could you perhaps use some of your down time, time that might otherwise have been committed to social gathering, to consider whether any sort of “idol worship” has invaded your life?

Today's gospel text follows immediately after last week's gospel. Jesus has eaten his Last Supper with his disciples. He's just told them not to be troubled, but to trust in him, because he's going ahead of them to prepare a place in his Father's house. They don't need to worry about how to get there, because Jesus himself is **the way and the truth and the life**.

Now he says, **If you love me, keep my commands. I'll ask the Father, and he'll give you the Spirit of truth. The world can't accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.**

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Compare this with the *unknown god* of the Greeks: one unnamed god like all their others, created in their own image, or out of their own fantasy and desire. One imaginary god to go along with all the others they sought to manipulate for their own well-being.

*Our* God is the real deal. From the very beginning he's done everything he could to make himself known to his chosen people. Through the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—through Moses and the miraculous deliverance from the Egyptians; through judges and kings, prophets and psalmists; through teachings and preachings and miracles in the Hebrew scriptures—in all these ways the One God strove to make himself known to those he'd created.

And when all else failed, he came in the flesh, God-born-in-a-stable and laid in a manger, to reveal himself to those he loved. Again he used teaching and preaching and miraculous signs and wonders.

The greatest wonder of all? **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”**

This God, *OUR God*, has made himself physically one with us. He is *in* us. He has now sent the Holy Spirit, who **“will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.”**

We received that Holy Spirit in our baptism, each one of us. We have been *sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross + of Christ forever!* Our heads know that, but so often our hearts and spirits forget it. Please, please, use this time of separation from the routines of life that are so familiar, and LET yourself be reminded of the intimate, passionate, un-dying love and presence of God-with-us, Emmanuel!

The final step in God's self-revelation was the crucifixion, when God himself died on a cross to show the world what true love looked like.

In John's gospel, Jesus knew what awaited him only hours after his Passover meal. Chapters thirteen through seventeen are called his *high priestly prayer*, a combination of teaching his disciples and praying to his Father so those who loved him might begin to understand the Trinity, the Three-in-One God we worship.

Today's gospel names each Person of the triune God. Jesus, the **Son**, says: **I will ask the Father. . . . He will give you the Spirit of truth. . . . I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.** There's no way *this* God can be *unknown!* These are the words of Jesus. God—not some “unknown god,” but *our* God—so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that **everyone** who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life. Thanks be to God!

Sermon Hymn

503 O Jesus, I Have Promised

1 O Je - sus, I have prom - ised To serve you to the end;  
2 Oh, let me feel you near me; The world is ev - er near.  
3 Oh, let me hear you speak - ing In ac - cents clear and still.  
4 O Je - sus, you have prom - ised To all who fol - low you

Re - main for - ev - er near me, My mas - ter and my friend.  
I see the sights that daz - zle, The tempt - ing sounds I hear.  
A - bove the storms of pas - sion, The mur - murs of self - will.  
That where you are in glo - ry Your ser - vant shall be too.

I shall not fear the bat - tle If you are by my side,  
My foes are ev - er near me, A - round me and with - in;  
Now speak to re - as - sure me, To has - ten or con - trol;  
And Je - sus, I have prom - ised To serve you to the end;

Nor wan - der from the path - way If you will be my guide.  
But, Je - sus, then draw near - er To shield my soul from sin.  
Now speak and make me lis - ten, O Guard - ian of my soul.  
Oh, give me grace to fol - low, My mas - ter and my friend.

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The Apostles' Creed

God has made us his people through our baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, 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, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.



**Prayers of Intercession**

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places, praying for the church, the world, and all those who are in need.

Abiding God, you have revealed yourself to us in the form of your Son, Jesus Christ. Embolden your church, as your followers, to reveal your love to everyone in all that we say and all that we do. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You are the creator of heaven and earth. Renew the health of oceans, rivers, lakes, springs, glaciers, and other bodies of water that give life to your creatures. Teach us to be faithful stewards. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You call all people of the world your children. Judge the nations justly, show mercy to the oppressed, and speak truth to power in all lands through your prophets. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You come near to us when we are lost or confused, and you hear our distress. We pray for all who suffer in any way in the midst of this crisis of health and economy. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Your commands are good and merciful. Give us courage to take hold of our baptismal promises to work for justice, to advocate for the voiceless, and to free those who are oppressed and imprisoned in body, mind, or spirit. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You remain with us always, O God, and your kingdom has no end. We remember the saints who have gone before us (especially . . . ); unite us with them forever in your final victory over death. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

All these things, and whatever else you see that we need, we ask you in the name of Jesus, your Son, who taught us to pray, saying, **Our Father. . . .**

Offering Hymn

Take My Life, that I May Be

406

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two systems. The first system has a vocal line and a bass line. The second system also has a vocal line and a bass line. The lyrics are printed below the vocal lines.

1 Take my life, that I may be Con - se - crat - ed, Lord, to thee;  
2 Take my hands and let them move At the im - pulse of thy love;  
3 Take my voice and let me sing Al - ways, on - ly, for my King;  
4 Take my sil - ver and my gold, Not a mite would I with - hold;

Take my mo - ments and my days; Let them flow in cease - less praise.  
Take my feet and let them be Swift and beau - ti - ful for thee.  
Take my lips and let them be Filled with mes - sag - es from thee.  
Take my in - tel - lect, and use Ev - 'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

5 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.

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

Benediction

May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face to shine upon you and give you peace; may the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace (Numbers 6:23-26).

**Sending Hymn**

721      **Go, My Children, with My Blessing**

1 "Go, my chil - dren, with my bless - ing, nev - er a - lone.  
2 "Go, my chil - dren, sins for - giv - en, at peace and pure.  
3 "Go, my chil - dren, fed and nour - ished, clos - er to me.  
4 "I the Lord will bless and keep you, and give you peace.

Wak - ing, sleep - ing, I am with you, you are my own.  
Here you learned how much I love you, what I can cure.  
Grow in love and love by serv - ing, joy - ful and free.  
I the Lord will smile up - on you, and give you peace.

In my love's bap - tis - mal riv - er I have made you mine for - ev - er.  
Here you heard my dear Son's sto - ry, here you touched him, saw his glo - ry.  
Here my Spir - it's pow - er filled you, here my ten - der com - fort stilled you.  
I the Lord will be your Fa - ther, Sav - ior, Com - fort - er and Broth - er.

Go, my chil - dren, with my bless - ing, you are my own."  
Go, my chil - dren, sins for - giv - en, at peace and pure."  
Go, my chil - dren, fed and nour - ished, joy - ful and free."  
Go, my chil - dren, I will keep you, and give you peace."

The musical score consists of four systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The lyrics are printed below the vocal line of each system.

**Dismissal**

Stay in peace to love and serve the Lord!  
**Thanks be to God!**

## Keeping in Touch

There have been gifts to the Cemetery Fund this year as follows:

January—\$200.00 Burial fee for Betty Metcalf

\$20.00 Memorial gift in honor of Betty Metcalf given by Gerald & Barb Borchardt

February—\$20.00 Memorial gift in honor of Kenneth Dahlke given by Gerald & Barb Borchardt

### **April was designated as the month for a special giving emphasis to the Cemetery Fund...**

A total of \$195.00 was received from donors: *Terry Borchardt, Lillian Bauman, Cal & Jayne Tackes, Marion Werner, and an anonymous giver.*

Special Memorial Gifts were received to the Cemetery Fund in honor of Harvey Willhite:

\$500.00 given by *Enola Willhite* and

\$25.00 given by *Gloria Jaeger.*



Many thanks to these individuals for contributing to this important ministry of St. John.

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A Circle of JOY collection tote is in the rear, east entry way by the offering drop box. Their need is GREAT at this time. *Thanks for your generosity!*



The recent Council Meeting minutes will be posted by the Offering Box.

The NEXT Council Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 11, at 6:30pm

There is a Volunteer **Mowing Sign-up Sheet** inside the northeast entrance to the church building by the locked Offering Deposit box. The responsibility is for 1 week per signature line. Please sign up to share in this IMPORTANT act of caring for our church property!



### **St John Fund raiser: Brat Fry update**

At this time, we are still planning our **June 5th Brat Fry**, if something changes within the State Plan, we will let you know. **Volunteers** will be needed to do the following:

- (1) bake cookies - 2 per baggie if large, 3 per baggie if small
- (2) set up tent(s) the day of at 07:00am
- (3) cooking brats/hamburgers the day of starting at 8:15.am-ish
- (4) serving food, taking money starting at 9:00am-ish
- (5) clean up and tent disassembly at 3:30-ish

Please contact Shirley Rosien 715-574-3277 if you are able to assist.

### **Prayer Concerns**

**Trish Donlin**—will be having knee replacement surgery on Tuesday, May 19th.



### **Today's FOOD for Thought**

Ran out of toilet paper and now using lettuce leaves.

Today was just the tip of the iceberg, tomorrow remains to be seen.

