

Straight from the "Hart"

Special Installment - March 6, 2022

First Sunday of Lent



Welcome Thank you choosing to read. Lent began last Wednesday, March 2. Every Tue and Thu throughout Lent the sanctuary will be open from 10 am-12 noon via the ramp door with candles and soft background music and dim lights, some blessed communion elements and water and some optional suggestions will be on a hand-out for you to spend some time alone in prayer and or meditation and or just to settle your spirits in this sacred place.

A new Worship Series has also begun. Its full title is "Established in the rock-solid love of God", but we will call it "Established" for short, and each week there will be a key word identifying a foundational building block of developing and growing that kind of faith relationship with God. Today's building block is "knowledge", or "knowing" and we'll place that brick in front of us as we begin to lay that foundation. [Place brick on the back center of communion table...]



Apostle's Creed

Opening Prayer Almighty God, we have gathered to face our temptations, to gain healing and strength from our hurts and pains -- to turn to you in our weaknesses, for you are mighty to save. Lift us up so we can continue to represent you well in the name of Jesus, bringing healing and love in Jesus' name. Amen.

Call to Worship Lent reminds us that many are broken, fearful, cynical, and empty. But it also reminds us that Christ emptied himself, dashing our doubts, facing our fears, and breaking himself for us --- so that as we open ourselves to him and trust in him, we may find hope, peace, freedom, and abundant life.

Lent traces Jesus' journey to the cross. Therefore, on this first Sunday of Lent, let's remind ourselves to stay close to the cross and all that that symbol has come to mean for us by singing Jesus keep me near the cross

Music (vv 1,2,3) Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

Let's continue to move into the season by remembering it is a time to learn mastery against temptation and the practices that to human maturity through the exercise of self-discipline. Let's sing to the tune of Amazing Grace, Lord, Who Throughout These 40 Days.

Music (vv 1,2,3,5) Lord, Who Throughout These 40 Days to Amazing Grace Theme (Part 1)

There is something about going through challenges together that provides unique opportunities to bond with each other. In the hymn it is with Jesus who faced temptations just like us. The following abridged and slightly adapted story by Oscar Wilde also speaks of the building of bonds with each other...

Once upon a time, every afternoon, as they came home from school, the children would stop and play in a Giant's garden. It was a lovely garden, with soft green grass. Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars, and there were twelve peach trees. In springtime delicate blossoms of pink and pearl burst forth, and in the autumn, they bore rich fruit. Birds sat on the trees and sang so sweetly that the children used to stop their games and listen to them. They told each other how happy they were.

One day Giant came back home. He had been off to visiting a Cornish ogre for the last 7 years... [but now it was time to return to his castle].

When he arrived, he saw the children playing in the garden. "What are you doing here?" (gruffly) As the children ran away, he called after them, "My own garden is my own garden. Anyone can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself." So he built a high wall around it and put up a notice board: Trespassers will be prosecuted.

He was a very selfish Giant. The children had nowhere to play when their lessons were over. They tried the road, but it was dusty and stony and they didn't like it. They walked around the high walls and talked about how happy and fun and beautiful as the garden was inside. Spring came all over the country with its blossoms and little birds. But in the Giant's garden, winter hung on. Trees forgot to blossom and birds did not come to sing because there were no children.

Once a beautiful flower stuck its head above the grass, but when it saw the notice board it was so sorry for the children that it slipped back into the ground and went back to sleep.

Snow and Frost were both pleased. "Spring has forgotten this garden," they cried, "we can live here year round." Snow covered the grass with her great white cloak and frost painted all the trees silver. They invited the north wind to stay with them and he roared, "Oh this is a delightful spot! We must invite Hail!"

Every day for 3 hours, Hail's covered the garden in gray and his icy breath rattled the castle's roof, breaking most of its [shingles] and then ran round and round the garden as fast as he could go.

As Giant, looked out at his cold, white garden, he muttered, "I cannot understand why Spring is so late in coming." Spring never came. Neither did Summer or Autumn. While blossoms and fruit came to the rest of the world, Winter, Snow, Frost, the North Wind, and Hail continued to dance in Giant's garden.

Then one morning while the Giant was lying awake in bed, he heard some lovely music. It sounded so sweet, it sounded like the king's musicians must be passing by. But it was actually only a small linnnet (a small finch) singing outside his window. It had been so long since he heard a bird sing it seemed the most beautiful music in the world. Hail stopped dancing over his head, the North wind stilled its roaring, and a wonderful aroma filtered through the windows. The Giant jumped out of bed and ran to the window, "I think Spring has come at last!" He looked out and what did he see?

Through a little hole in the wall, the children had crept in, and they were sitting in the branches of the trees. In every tree Giant could see there was a little child. The trees were so glad to have the children back that they had covered themselves with blossoms and were waving their arms gently above the children's heads. Birds were flying about and twittering with delight and the flowers were looking up through the soft grass and laughing. It was a lovely scene. Only in the farthest corner of the garden did winter maintain a foothold. A little boy was standing there. He was so small that he could not reach up to the branches of the still frosted and snow-covered tree, the North wind, with its last breaths, was breathing hard and roaring above that one tree.

"Climb up, little boy" said the tree as it bent its limbs as low as it could, but the boy was too tiny and all he could do was wander around the tree weeping bitterly.

The Giant saw this and his heart melted. He was sorry for what he had done. "How selfish I have been," he mourned. "Now I know why Spring would not come. I will put that boy in the tree and then I will knock down the wall, and my garden will be the children's playground forever and ever."

He crept downstairs and opened the front door softly and went out to the garden. When the children saw him, they all scattered. The garden became winter again. The little boy in the corner did not run, for his eyes were so full of tears that he did not see the Giant. The Giant slipped up behind him, took him gently in his hands and lifted him up into the tree, which immediately broke into blossom which drew the birds to sing on it. The boy flung his arms around the giant's neck and kissed his cheek.

When the other children saw the Giant wasn't wickedly selfish anymore, they returned, and Spring came with them. Giant said, "Children, it is your garden now," and he took a big axe and he knocked down the walls. When people went to market, they saw the children playing with the Giant in the most beautiful garden they had ever seen. [Pause] We'll call that "Scene 1".

Responsive Reading (L - Lay Reader, C - Congregation)

As we begin a series on the basics of building and maintaining a close relationship in the rock-solid love of God, Peter reminds us who we were, who we are, and how we are supposed to live because of it.

L: Come to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is precious to God and chosen by him for great honor.

C: He is the living Cornerstone of God's temple.

L: And we are living stones that God is building into his spiritual house.

C: We are a chosen people.

L: We are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own special possession; chosen to show others the wonderful things he has done. For he called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.

C: Once we had no identity as a people. Now we are God's people. Once we had not received mercy; but now we have received God's mercy.

L: Therefore, let's rid ourselves of any behavior that hurts others. Be done with deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and unkind speech. Like newborn babies hungering for milk, crave pure teachings that feed your spirit.

C: By it we will grow into a full experience of salvation.

L: Seek this nourishment, now that we have tasted of the Lord's kindness.

C: Anyone who trusts in him will never be disappointed or disgraced.

(Inspired by portions of 1 Peter 2:4-6,8-10,1-3 NLT, ERV, NIV)

Series Video

I enlarged it as best I could, but for some of us, the words still may have been hard to see, so let me repeat the key words ...

The whole purpose of Jesus' arrival, of the cross, of the resurrection, is so that you may have eternal life. There is this thought that if you give your life to Jesus, all of a sudden your life is smooth and fine,

but that's not why Jesus came. Jesus taught that eternal life is not about a destination, [or that] we trust in some outcome, trust in some blessings, instead of trusting in him. Eternal life is knowing God. (Pause)



Getting to know him is the beginning of developing a deeper relationship with him. So let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing a traditional hymn -- "More About Jesus"

Music (vv 1,2,3) More About Jesus

More about Jesus would I know, more of his grace to others show;
more of his saving fullness see, more of his love who died for me.

Refrain

**More, more about Jesus, more, more about Jesus,
more of his saving fullness see, more of his love who died for me.**

More about Jesus let me learn, more of his holy will discern;
Spirit of God my teacher be, showing the things of Christ to me.

Refrain

More about Jesus on his throne, riches in glory all his own;
more of his kingdom's sure increase; more of his coming, Prince of Peace.

Refrain

CCLI # 2561297

Prayers Almighty God, we pause to breathe deeply and slowly, reminding ourselves to rest in the warming light of your peace. You are our refuge, our fortress. We trust in you. You are the God of the wilderness and of the water. This is the season your Son prepared for ministry by denying himself, intentionally moving alone into the wilderness to face and defeat temptation. We too, face many temptations, betrayals and hurts. Guide us through this season, that we may not avoid the struggle, but open ourselves to your blessing through the cleansing depths of repentance. Deliver us to freedom, teach us to be grateful for all the

bountiful blessings that come from your hand. Deepen our faith that we may resist temptation and in the midst of trial, proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord.

It can be in the midst of joys that tempt us to forget and neglect (take for granted) your giftedness behind our prospering moments, or it can be in the midst of sorrows that tempt us to doubt and deny your support and power. Therefore, we pause to lift gratitude for our joys and to lift intercessions for the hurts and pains of others as well as ourselves. **Praises and Petitions** * We continue to pray for Jim Mallott, * for Gar Lemon, * for Julie Evans, for Bruce Harton, for Kathy Novak's friend Beverly Wilkinson, who has developed complications, * and Lord, we pray for a quick resolution for peace in the Ukraine, and the Gordoniers also request prayers for Ray and Kathy, cousins with various health issues that have not improved over the last couple years, * and we also pray for those people and situations who have not been named today except in our hearts and minds in this moment of silence. (Pause) Lent reminds us that Christ looked forward to the glory of the cross, wrestled with the power of death and broke its hold over your people. Through it he drew all people to you, that we who confess Jesus as Lord may find eternal life and learn to pray as you taught, and today we sing it -- **LORD'S PRAYER SUNG**

Bible Reading Introduction

Jesus once again warns his disciples that his departure is soon, and they won't see him again. They will mourn and grieve while the world rejoices over what will happen to him. But like the pain and grief of childbirth, soon the grief will give way to the joy of new life brought into the world. After a little while, they will see Jesus again. They will rejoice and no one will rob them of that abundant joy. And they will receive whatever they ask of the Father... for the Father will love them because they loved Jesus and believed that he came from God the Father and would return to him.



The disciples say they understand, but Jesus asks, "Do you finally believe?" And then he predicted that they would all scatter and leave him abandon alone. But then Jesus added that the Father would be with him. He said he was telling them all these things so they would have peace in him. For on earth, they would have many trials and sorrows. But he also encourages them to take heart because he has overcome the world.

Bible Reading

After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. For you have granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to each one you have given him. Now this is eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth... “I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is a gift from you, for I have passed on to them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They know with certainty that I came from you, and they believe you sent me. “My prayer is ... for those you have given me, because they belong to you. I am coming to you, Holy Father. Now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united as one just as we are one. I am coming to you now. I told them many things while I am still with them in this world so they would be completely filled with my joy within them. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. For them, I sanctify myself, [I am setting myself apart] I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they too can be [set apart for holiness by means of the truth].

John 17:1-3, 6-9, 11b-c, 13,17-19 (NIV, ERV, NLT [CJB])

Jesus and his disciples frequently withdrew, separating themselves from others and the duties of the day to draw close to God in prayer. Our hymnwriter encourages us to do the same. Let’s sing before the sermon.

Music Take Time to be Holy

Sermon Established: By Knowing

Memorial Day, 1912. It was the second annual race. Ralph DePalma set a blistering pace in his Mercedes and led for 198 laps. He had built up an eight lap lead. He was about to hit the backstretch and would be coming around for the checkered flag when his engine failed and he coasted to a stop. Undaunted, DePalma and his ride-along mechanic (apparently they didn’t have pit crews back then, they had ride-along mechanics) Rupert Jeffkins jumped out of the car and pushed it the final mile across the finish line. Only Joe Dawson managed to pass them to win the race. DePalma was *officially* disqualified, but their effort not only gained the crowd’s standing ovation for their effort, it captured the hearts of the nation and the Indianapolis 500 became an *established* American tradition.

This past Wednesday we wrapped up a series on things God calls us to be and do, and that final call was to become established in our relationship with him. Therefore, this new (Lenten) series leading us to Easter is designed to encourage us to make every noble effort to win the spiritual race of life, by laying the foundational building blocks of relationships -- with each other, and in the rock-solid love of God.

We begin with the text just read for us. Jesus is nearing his crucifixion and he prays for believers both current and future: It begins with his relationship with the heavenly Father and his mission on earth. Jesus came to do more than get us to heaven or to give us a new (or restored) moral code. He came to earth, headed for Jerusalem, died on the cross, defeated death and rose again in order to glorify the Father and to give us eternal life. "Eternal" is a word that refers not only to a length of time, but a quality of time, and that doesn't begin in the next life, but that high quality of the life, that abundant life, is offered to us even now when we accept him. High quality does not mean easy or trouble free. It means we have someone who compassionately cares and loves and who walks with us, guiding us through each day.

Jesus makes it clear, the quality of eternal life comes from knowing -- about being in a relationship with -- God and himself, Jesus Christ. (See John 17:1-3) And as you probably know by now, when they say "knowing", it is not knowing of God, or about God, though it certainly includes that -- but it means being in a trusting relationship with -- receiving his love and offering our love in a relationship that transforms our lives. Right?

Jesus prays that he has faithfully fulfilled his mission by revealing in detail God's character to his people so that they are now certain that Jesus' message comes from firsthand knowledge. (John 17:6-9) Therefore, the first step to developing a rock-solid relationship with God is to look at the life and words of Jesus. Someone once asked a scholar, "Why is it that you study so slowly — but pray so fast?" He replied, "Because when I pray, I talk to God, but when I study, God talks to me."

Jesus shares with us all of who God is. Seek him always.

Soak up as much information as we can about Jesus, about God -- not so we are religiously intellectually accomplished; but so that we can come to know him personally, know who he is, understand what he wants of us, and what we can expect of Him; not out of obligation; but out of strengthening of our love relationship with Him.

Granted, it is easier to see in the past how God has been with His people -- it is recorded for us, and we have the benefit of hindsight. It is easy to say 50 years later, or 5,000 years after something, "Yeah, that's how it worked out, this is how they should have acted." We have the benefit of hindsight. But without the benefit of hindsight, as we live in this present moment, it can be challenging at times to figure out exactly what it is he may want of us, or what we should expect of him in any current situation... but it doesn't mean we shouldn't try.

Phyllis L. Hubbell says one of her favorite stories is a legend about the founder of the Hasidic Jews. When he was dying, he called his followers together and said, "During my life I have acted as intermediary for you. Now you must do this for yourselves. You know the place in the forest where I call to God. Go to the same place and light a fire as I have instructed you. Then say the prayer I have taught you. If you do this, God will come."

The first generation did exactly as he had said, and God came. The next generation forgot exactly how they were supposed to light the fire. Nevertheless, they faithfully went to the special place in the forest and said the prayer. God came. The third generation was unable to know the proper way to light the fire and forgot where exactly in the forest they were supposed to go. But they went someplace and they said the prayer and God came. Several more generations came and went. No one remembered how to light the fire, where the special place was, or the exact words to the prayer. But one person remembered that there was a story about him and that they were supposed to do something, and God still came.

The analogy isn't perfect. Still, I think we can identify with that. We've forgotten, rejected, or lost forms and styles of those who went before us. Sometimes, like they did in the New Testament, we may even hang on to traditions that are not important and reject and dismiss the ones that are important. We can at times struggle with how to access exactly the right knowledge and how to apply faith to modern life. Yet we continue this journey together, seeking -- that is the key, isn't it -- seeking. Always seeking -- to live lives of integrity and courage; and even as the Bible constantly tells us -- the form is just a tool and expression -- it is the seeking heart that God desires most of all. It is the seeking heart to whom God comes -- which is why God still came. That is the point of that legend.

Jesus continues his prayer for the Father's protection over those who pursue the life God gifts us through Jesus. (John 17: 11b) Our hearts seek, and we do it with all diligence, but

<p>Pursue this life with his protection</p>
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ultimately, our progress is not dependent on our skills or strength; but on God's protection and love. When it comes to the spiritual journey it doesn't matter where we are, what point we started at; where that journey has taken us -- off course and on course, and all through -- only that we are still pursuing to progress in our relationship with God.

A group of Business Graduates started their first day of work as associates at a well-known Investment Banking Corporation. They sat in a conference room for a "get to know each other" session. Each associate was asked to tell the group a little about his or her personal background.

One man that was considerably older than the others said he had been an Army Ranger and led the brigade that had taken over Noriega's palace in Panama. He was injured in the raid and received a medal. He retired from the Army, unsuccessfully ran for Congress, then went to business school and here he was. The next guy admits that was a "...a rather tough act to follow." But he brashly pushed forward, "Basically, I have watched TV all my life. But now, the way I see it, I'm in the same position as he is."

I'm not sure if he was "seeing it" very well or not. Nevertheless, there is a *grain* of truth there – it is captured in the athletic competition saying, "You are only as good as your last game", sometimes your last play. a phrase that is used to keep the athletes pressing forward to become even better in every single practice so that they can perform at a higher level every time get on the court, the field, the rink; or -- the office, the school, the job, the recreation place -- whatever and wherever it might be. It doesn't matter how far we've come, how experienced we are - how long ago we have started our spiritual journey, how many setbacks we've had - it is only as we continue to press forward with God's protection that we will continue to thrive in the eternal life.

Paul wrote a letter to the Philippians. By now he was an accomplished and established missionary for Christ, still writes in Philippians that everything that he had accomplished he considered a loss and nothing compared with the higher worth of knowing Christ -- and that he wanted to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and participation in his suffering -- that he could somehow obtain the resurrection from the dead -- and that he *continues* to press forward to try and take hold of it -- for which Christ had already taken hold of him (Phil 3:7-14) But he's pushing forward.

And Jesus prays that moving forward with God's protection means that as we strive to thrive in our spiritual journey together under Jesus, it will bring unity in him and in God which will lead to joy. I don't need to tell you how a lack of unity can lead to a lack of joy. Most of us have been around long enough to know that experience. But as we grow, if we allow it, we can be united even when we do not agree about things. It is God's protection that allows unity and joy -- protection is not from every problem and pressure and stress but being able to sustain our spirit and remain faithful throughout all of those things, without failing him or each other in the midst of any situation. Or if we do, to find and receive and offer forgiveness and restoration when that happens.

United in joy

And then finally, as we get to know Jesus and the Father well, as he protects us, if we unite in mind and spirit and joy around the attitude of Jesus Christ, and as he sees us through, then we will be eager and determined to carry out what God is calling us to do. Sometimes, we get it turned around ... we want God to be eager and determined to carry out what we want to do.

**His mission
is our mission**

One teacher asked her second graders to draw a picture of what they would like to do with Jesus if he would decide to come and be with them for one day. One little girl who was trying to complete the assignment went to the teacher's desk and asked, "My drawing is almost finished, but I have a question. How do you spell Bloomingdale's?" Innocent enough for a second grader, for sure; (and not that it is wrong to want God to go with you to those places, I said that last week). But as we grow, is it about trying to get God to commit to our vision and dreams; or are we committed to his mission?

Jesus prays, Make them holy (set apart and completely committed) for just as the heavenly Father gave Jesus a mission to which he was totally dedicated--- which was to spread God's love to the world; so that through his actions; we can experience true love. He was so dedicated to that mission that He laid down His life for it. When the religious leaders asked Him about His purpose, He stated it clearly. "I have come to seek and to save the lost." -- just as the Father gave Jesus a mission -- Jesus gives us a mission in the world, and Jesus set himself apart, completely dedicated to us so that we can be purely dedicated in his mission for us. (See 17:17-19) -- to demonstrate God's love to everyone who crosses our path in any setting, wherever we go. Because if God is with us, God's love is with us, then wherever we go, God's love is going. But do we get it out of us? It is in us, but

do we get it out of us -- with each other? That is why Peter (in the responsive reading) calls us to be priests -- people who just introduce God to people and people to God, a holy kingdom, people who bridge that gap and bring the needs of people before God, and carry God's message of love and help to people, showing them what real living, real loving, real service is all about -- allowing the creator to make us his instruments of hope and peace, serving others and honoring Christ, and to keep craving and growing as eagerly as if it were a brand new experience.

The Christian life is about a rock-solid relationship with him. That is where it starts. Knowing him. He is the cornerstone of our faith through which we have eternal life that begins right now. And it doesn't start with us, but with God's grace who started with us and what he did for us through Christ on the cross.

Communion

Theme (Part 2) --

And so now it is time to return to our Theme story - scene two. If you remember where we had left off, the tiny boy had hugged and kissed the giant and all the adults walking by witnessed the giant and children playing in the most beautiful garden they had ever seen.

As the day drew to a close it was time to say good-bye. As they did, the Giant asked, "But where is your little companion, the one who kissed me, the one I put in the tree?" The children did not know. "He has gone away." the concluded.

The Giant said, "Be sure to tell him to come tomorrow." But the children replied that they had never seen him before and did not know where he lived, and the Giant felt very sad.

The new routine continues, the Giant played with the children and was very kind to them, yet he longed to see his first young friend and was often heard saying, "How I would like to see him."

Years passed and the Giant grew old and feeble. He couldn't play anymore but he sat in a huge armchair and watched the children at their games and admired his garden. He said, "I have beautiful flowers, but the children are most beautiful flowers of all."

One winter morning he looked out his window as he was dressing. He didn't mind winter now, for he knew it was just Spring that was sleeping, and the flowers were



resting. As he looked out, he suddenly he rubbed his eyes in wonder and stared in the farthest corner of the garden. The tree there was covered with white blossoms, its branches golden with silver fruit hung from them -- and underneath it stood the boy he had loved so much.

With great joy, the Giant ran downstairs, into the garden, across the grass and came near the child. As he did his face grew red with anger, for he saw on the child's palms and feet the wounds of nail prints. "Who dared wound you?" cried the Giant, "Tell me so I can take a sword and slay them!"

"No," answered the child. "These are the wounds of love."

"Who are you?" the Giant felt a strange awe fall on him and he knelt before the child.

The child smiled on the Giant, "You let me play once in your garden, today you will come with me to my garden, which is Paradise."

And when the children arrived that afternoon, they found the Giant lying dead under the tree, all covered with white blossoms. [Pause]

Peter put it this way, (paraphrased primarily from the Message and NIV) God's divine power has given us everything we need to live a life of pleasing God through getting to know, personally and intimately, the Christ who invited us to God. And he has promised that you may participate in his divine nature... so make every effort to [grow your faith] so you will not be ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge and experience of Jesus Christ. Therefore, [as the TPT concludes Peter's words]: "Beloved ones, be eager to confirm [make every diligent effort] and validate that God has invited you to salvation and claimed you as his own. If you do these things, you will never stumble." 2 Peter 1:3-9 (MSG & NIV) 10 (TPT)

Invitation

And the sacrament of communion continues to remind us of this invitation to relationship, to know him and love him and repent of sin and seek to live in peace with one another. This is a season of the wilderness - the season we grasp to understand the Divine a little more. A time to reach inward to see the self that God sees. An opportunity gaze outward, caring for the Christ in and beyond our midst. Let's prepare for Communion by singing our prayer to know him more...

Music

To Know You More

To know you in all of your glory, to love you with all that I am.
with all of my heart, Lord, this is my prayer, to know you more.

To know you in all of your mercy, to serve you with all that I am.
with all of my heart, Lord, this is my prayer: To know you more.

To know you in all of your power, to trust you with all that I am.
With all of my heart, Lord, this is my prayer: To know you more. To know you more.
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Confession Let's continue to prepare our hearts by a time of confession. Let's pray. Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. As we take this Lenten journey, we seek your peace, We seek you. We remember Christ's time in the wilderness. The struggles. The hunger. We crave the bread of life. On our desert roads, we thirst for the fruit of the vine, the cup of blessings. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Assurance Lenten roads are long yet full of gifts. Lenten paths often seem chilly yet are warmed with the winds of the Spirit. The Spirit of God is the light that leads us in the hushed nights. Christ is our companion on the journey in the intense sunlight of day. Hear the good news: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God's love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven! Glory to God. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving (Bold lettering is spoken with the congregation)

God is with you!

God is with us all.

Open wide your hearts.

We open them completely to the Spirit of God.

May God's love nurture your spirits each day.

May God's light sustain our souls each night.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed,

your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through the prophets. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join in their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always, in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit. And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

May the Spirit who traveled with Christ in the wilderness be poured out on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and cup, and what you are holding, or using at home; filling us with hope in God. May the Spirit speak to us in this season of wilderness, becoming our strength on this journey and filling our lives with love. Making these elements be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

Receiving the Bread and Cup Through Jesus the Christ's story, we remember the night before his arrest, The night of serenity, solemnity, and love. Jesus took in his hands bread from the table. Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ. He gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his

disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." The body of Christ, given for you. (Take and eat)

And when the supper was over, as the night grew long, Jesus took a cup filled with the fruit of the vine, The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ. He gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." The blood of Christ, given for you. (Take and drink).



Prayer Let's pray. In a spirit of gratitude, Lord, we give thanks for this time of Communion. There are no words to express the thanks we have for all you have done for us in your wonderful grace, for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. As we embark on this Lenten journey, remind us of your cross, and the cross we must carry - our daily disciplines – disciplines through which you may use to strengthen and establish your life in us and our life in you, surrounded by your peace. In the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Music **Beneath the Cross of Jesus**

Blessing Now go - established in the rock solid love of God by [knowing] and nurturing a growing relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who leads our old lives to the cross, and through it delivers us to new and eternal life. Amen.