

Straight from the "Hart"

May 7, 2023



Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are really glad you are here and participating in today's time of worship.

Opening Prayer Lord, we have come and give of ourselves because great music and little birds both remind us of your majesty. Accept us, both "great and "small", with honor when we give ourselves to your love, justice, and mercy. Receive us as signs that we remember that you are the root of it all. We marvel that you love us and are saying thank you by our lives that we give in Jesus' name. Amen.

(ad from Herb Mather © 2002 General Board of Discipleship
in UM Song of Worship, Leaders Edition)

(Series) Responsive Call to Worship

w/ (Ref only) *Bind Us Together*

(R – Reader, C – Congregation)

R: Come, all who have experienced and entrusted their lives to the love of God in us. Come, all who desire to live faithfully in love and in God. God is love, and truly lives in us and we in him if we love one another.

C: We have come so that God's love will accomplish its mission in and among us.

Inspired by 1 John 4:16,12b (VOICE)

Bind Us Together

Words and Music: Bob Gillman, 1977 © Kingsway's Thank You Music

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together with cords that cannot be broken.

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, Lord, bind us together in love.

Music Today we remind ourselves of God's unending, unconditional covenant friendship love to us. **Great is Thy Faithfulness**

Text: Thomas O. Chisholm, 1923 Music: William M. Runyan, 1923

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1. Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

Refrain

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
 Morning by morning new mercies I see;
 all I have needed thy hand hath provided;
 great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

2. Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
 sun, moon and stars in their courses above
 join with all nature in manifold witness
 to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love

Refrain

3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
 thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
 strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
 blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Refrain

Theme More than anything else, the Bible is a love story of a rejected God who continues to crave to be in a deep personal friendship with each one of us. Every strategy, every calling, every story is about the rising closer to -- or falling further away from -- the God who is faithfully and gracefully acting to develop a binding friendship with humanity, despite our tendency to so easily break that relationship. Leo Tolstoy gives us a quick story illustrating our propensity to short-circuit relationships.

It was an early Easter. Snow remained in the yards, but water ran in streams down the village street. Water running through farmyards had formed a large muddy puddle on a side lane between two homesteads. Two little girls, one very small, one slightly larger, had met at church. They were both dressed in new frocks, the smaller one in blue, the larger in yellow, and both with red kerchiefs (or we'd probably call them bandanas) on their heads. They showed each other their finery, and then began to play. They found themselves on opposite sides of that large, dirty puddle. They fancied to splash in it.

The younger one, Malásha was about to go in but the older stopped her. "Your mom will scold you. Let's take off our shoes and socks." So they did, and they lifted up their skirts and began walking toward each other through the puddle. The water rose to Malásha's ankles, and she got nervous. "It's deep, Akoúlya, I'm afraid." The older girl answered. "Don't be frightened, it won't get any deeper." As they got closer to each other, Akoúlya said, "Walk carefully, don't splash!" No sooner had

she said this than Malásha's unsteady steps in the uneven pool caused her to plop her foot down so hard that it splashed all over Akoúlya's dress, eyes and nose. Akoúlya was instantly angry and moved to strike Malásha. Malásha knew she was in trouble. She quickly scrambled out of the pool and wanted to run home.

But just then Akoúlya's mother walked by and saw them, and saw Akoúlya's new dress stained with muddy water and yelled, "You naughty girl, what have you been doing?!" Akoúlya replied, "Malásha did it on purpose!"

Then Akoúlya's mother seized Malásha to discipline her roughly. Malásha howled so loud that she was heard all the way down the street, which of course brought her mother running. "What are you doing to my girl?" she said to the other mother and neighbor. This quickly became an angry, loud quarrel. This brought the men out. A crowd gathered on the street. There was a lot of shouting and no listening. It escalated to shoving, and it was about to come to blows.

Akoúlya's grandmother stepped into the fray trying to calm everyone down, "What are you thinking of, friends? Is this right to act like this? And on Easter too? It is a time for rejoicing, not for folly like this." But they did not listen and nearly knocked her off her feet. She would not have been able to quiet the crowd had it not been for the two girls.

You see, Akoúlya had wiped the mud off of her frock and gone back to the puddle, picked up a stone and began digging a channel on the edge of that puddle, allowing the water to begin running out and into the street. The smaller Malásha soon joined her digging at the channel with a chip of wood – but then she lost it in the now flowing water. "Catch it! Catch it!" Akoúlya happily shouted to Malásha, who was laughing so hard she could neither speak nor grab the chip of wood. Highly delighted, they chased the wood chip, one on either side of their new stream -- flowing right into the middle of the group of men and the grandmother who was trying to pacify them.

The grandmother then said to the men, "Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? to go on fighting on account of these two lassies, when they themselves have forgotten all about it and are playing happily together. Dear little souls! They are wiser than you!"

The men looked at the girls, were ashamed of themselves, and each went to their own home. And Tolstoy finishes his story with this quote: "unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

This story was resolved by the overtures of the grandma and children. But just as often, overtures are rejected and rather than befriending others or God, humanity responds with rivalry, metaphorically or even literally crucifying others who they see as competition to “our rights” or God’s rightful position in the center of our life and our Universe. We set ourselves up as alienated enemies of God, which is reflected in our human relationships as well. Then, to fill the void left by our choice to keep God out of our life, we chase any and every substitute we can find for him.

Intro to and Bible Reading 1

So, Paul, living in a world where substitutes were usually still found in idols and a plethora of gods, many of them with idols, altars, shrines and temples built in their honor. Paul enters Athens and sees among the altars one that was built to cover all their bases – it was inscribed “to an Unknown God”. Athens had a special place where they gathered to discuss philosophy and religions and new ideas. Paul uses this observation and meeting place to inform them about this “unknown God” and his ongoing mission from creation to Christ: to seek and save and befriend humanity and all his creation. (Sum of Acts 17:15-23)



This is the God who made the universe and all it contains, the God who is the [Lord] of all heaven and all earth. It would be illogical to assume that a God of this magnitude could possibly be contained in any man-made structure, no matter how majestic. Nor would it be logical to think that this God would need human beings to provide Him with food and shelter—after all, He Himself would have given to humans everything they need—life, breath, food, shelter, and so on. This God made us in all our diversity from one original person, allowing each culture to have its own time to develop, giving each its own place to live and thrive in its distinct ways. His purpose in all this was that people of every culture and religion would search for this ultimate God, [and perhaps reach out for him and find him]. Yet, in truth, God is not far from any of us. For you know the saying, “We live in God; we move in God; we exist in God.” [“For in him we live and move and have our being”] And still another said, “We are indeed God’s children.”

Acts 17:24-28 (VOICE)[NIV]

Music If we are reaching for and finding the Creator of life, then we will want him to breath his life into us. Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing...

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Words: Edwin Hatch, 1878 Music: Robert Jackson, 1888

1. Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.
2. Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure,
until with thee I will one will, to do and to endure.
3. Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am wholly thine,
till all this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.

Prayers Lord, we sing because your life and love is in us. You have done marvelous things, working your salvation, renewal and restoration -- and making it known and accessible to all. You remember your love and faithfulness to your people, and that is why we shout and sing with joy before you. We hear waves lapping the shore, rivers rippling over its beds, the splashing of fish leaping with life. The mountains too, stand as a joyful testimony to your majestic and decisive rightness. All of nature proclaims your glory., You invite the sea, the earth, and everything that lives in it to sing before you. So we do.

And we love you, and your Son Jesus. That is why we desire to do what he taught, and what he taught is not burdensome because we can overcome by our trust in you. Strengthen our many talents and skills and instill in us confidence in your plans for our future, where energies can be gathered up and used for the good of all people in your name.

Petitions We also ask you to undertake also for those that we are concerned about in our hearts and minds. We offer our prayers for: * Terri requests prayers for her parents, Jim and MaryJo Mallot, both suffering from upper respiratory issues, * for our secretary Karen who is home and doing better after some pain and precautionary tests, * we continue to pray for the continued healing of Sara's manager Rob who got his wisdom teeth removed, * and for Ben Williams who is continuing to improve, and those who are traveling, and others that we may know about but has not been announced, we ask you, God who knows every situation, that you undertake on the behalf of your creation and world... And finally, * we also pray for

Quilt Beverly Davidson (Charles Kirkpatrick's sister), who is recovering from rotator cuff surgery and is facing knee surgery, and for whom we dedicate this quilt.

Dear Lord, today we ask a special blessing on Beverly Davidson. We pray for your loving arms to enfold her with your strength to give her faith and patient endurance throughout this journey of healing. In quiet times, as she wraps this shawl around her, let your peace reign within her, and your spirit calm her. Let the love and prayers of this church bring comfort to her heart, and rest to her body.



In the darkest times of pain and weakness and discomfort, remind her that you are there, always awake, keeping watch, holding her close, sharing her inmost thoughts. You hold a special place in your heart for each one of us and you are with us each moment of every day...reminding us that we are never alone.

With thanksgiving for the loving hearts and caring hands who put this quilt together, we pray this quilt will express your love for Beverly Davidson in the name of the One who is the ultimate healer and who taught us to pray... **Lord's Prayer**

Intro to and Bible Reading 2

LR: Most of us probably know the story of Jonah – He is called to warn Nineveh of its pending destruction because of their evil practices. He doesn't want to, so he runs the other way. God detours his travels and puts him where he needs him. Jonah goes through the town and warns them. The city responds and repents, turns away from their evil, and because of this God chooses to spare them. And then we get to the whole point of the book. Jonah is angry that God was compassionate on these foreigners. In fact, he prayed that he knew God would be gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and that is why he did not want to preach to them. Jonah was depressed and furious. But God tries to teach Jonah.

Jonah left the city and found a place east of the city, where he made himself a shelter and sat down under it, in its shade, to see what would happen to the city. The Lord God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to [better] shade his head and relieve his discomfort, and Jonah was delighted about the plant. But at dawn the next day God sent a worm, which attacked the plant, so that it dried up and withered. Then, when the sun rose high in the sky, God caused a scorching east wind to blow; and the sun

blazed down on Jonah's head so hard that he grew faint. He begged God to let him die, saying, "I would be better off dead than alive."

God asked Jonah, "Is it right for you to be so angry just because this plant died?"

He answered, "Yes, it's right for me to be so angry that I could die!"

The Lord said, "You're concerned over this plant, though it cost you no effort; you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and perished overnight. If you can get upset over a plant, surely I should be concerned about the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than 120,000 people who do not know their right hand from their left (who didn't know they were doing wrong) — not to mention all the animals." Jonah 4:5-11 (CJB, NIV, ERV)

Music Jonah cared only about himself and his own people, more concerned about what a plant could do for him than a whole city full of – "those other people" -- even though he knew Jonah knew it, he needed to be reminded point blank that God was the Creator and caretaker of all, Please stand and comfortable and sing...

In Christ There is No East or West

Words: John Oxenham (vv 1, 2, 4), 1913 (v 3) Laurence Hull Stookey, 1987

© v 3 – 1989 UM Publishing House

Music: Afro-American Spiritual; ad., harm. by Harry T. Burleigh, 1939

1. In Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north;
but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth.
2. In Christ shall true hearts everywhere their high communion find;
his service is the golden cord close binding humankind.
3. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, and neither slave nor free;
both male and female heirs are made, and all are kin to me.
4. In Christ now meet both east and west, in him meet south and north;
all Christly souls are one in him throughout the whole wide earth.

Sermon Reaching Through the Faulty Connection

[Garden] The Bible begins with a clear and healthy connection between God and humanity – walking together in the garden, gifted with ample provision and purposeful work. But then humanity chose to go their own way and the connection has been faulty ever since. Outside the garden, God graciously fixes them up to help them on their journey of life outside the garden. **[Noah]** But as the story is told, despite God's graciousness, humanity continues to spiral down into something worse, and the spiral not only goes down it goes wide, worse expanding

until we get an evil-bent world from which God reached out to intervene to save Noah and his family. God made a colorful covenant promise with them and told them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth – that is – to create an ever-growing number of people who will live in a right relationship with God, who will be his intimate covenant friend, cooperating in his creativity, being stewards, (co-workers) in care for his creation.

[Shinar] Soon after the Noah covenant, the people decided they would again try to rival God and violate his limitations -- this time, by refusing to scatter into the earth, but gathering in one spot to build a pride-filled tower reaching toward heaven.

The covenant with the first couple failed. Humanity left the paradise of Eden. The safety of the ark and the covenant with Noah also quickly failed. Shinar, the location of what is more commonly known as the Tower of Babel story, was yet another attempt at a *human* made paradise, and they were evicted once again.

Leaving God and going our own way takes place over and over and over. We're just as stubborn as God – He stubbornly reaches, we stubbornly go the other way, constantly putting up insulation barriers between ourselves and God and between ourselves and each other. It seems we cannot get past this “faulty connection”. Like a switch with a disconnected wire, it doesn't matter how many times we flip it up or down, the light will not turn on. Some blame God for this disconnect.

William Barry describes it this way (more or less): The deception is that we think we can gain control of our own existence on our own, by our own actions, and that God does not want us to have this power and so he cuts the wire. But the truth is that it is not God who sets up rivalry between himself and us. We were created in his image because God wants us to be with him and work with him. He feels no need to sever the wire -- he is not threatened by us even if we try to usurp his place in the Universe. It is by our own choices that we are separated and evicted from Paradise, from God's presence. We are the ones who have the (light switch) screw loose (yes, we have a screw loose 😊) and we are the ones who choose to snip the wire.

We know this because as we read on in Genesis, there is only a brief pause for a bit of “ancestry.com” before God is already developing his next strategy to fix the faulty connection, and restore his beloved humanity to the next version of paradise.

[Abram and Sarai -- Light to the Nations] This time it is Abram and Sarai. The Lord sends them to a new land and calls them into covenant. He challenges them to found a great nation whose ultimate purpose is to be a "light to the nations". They were to demonstrate what life is like when people come to know and live in covenant friendship with God. And by that demonstration, all the nations would be blessed because they too would be able to learn who God is and that he loves them and wants to be their friend.

Abram and Sarai are eventually renamed Abraham and Sarah. They and their descendants had their adventures and misadventures. At times doing well, by faith. At times taking things into their own hands, not trusting God, and complicating life significantly. But God did not give up on them, and they pushed forward together, renewing the covenant again and again.

We've already said that our relationship with God and our relationship with others is intrinsically linked. It wasn't by accident that Jesus said the greatest commandment is loving God with all that we are and that the second is like it (meaning inseparable from it you can't take them apart and do them separately -- or do one and not the other)... and that is to love others as yourself.

[Joseph] So the next major player in this story is Joseph. The story of this connection restoring effort by God. Some say Joseph is a foreshadowing of what Christ did. Young Joseph is given dreams of future leadership over his family. In my opinion, it was a mistake that he told them that. They didn't take to that too well, and so they were offended and angry and rebellious, because that is what we do to each other. They tried to create their own ideal paradise by planning to kill him -- but in the long run, they instead decide to sell him to a passing caravan.

Slave Joseph is brought to the Egypt area, where he rises to a degree of power in a prominent household. He was put in charge of the servants that served in that house. The lady of the house wants to use him for wrong purposes, and when he doesn't comply, she falsely entraps and accuses him, and he is thrown in jail.

In jail, Joseph again finds favor with the people in charge, and rises to the top of the prisoners, helping out the jail guards and so forth. He predicts the meaning of other's dreams. He asks that they remember him if they get out. One cell mate is restored to the palace. But once his personal crisis is over, he forgets all about Joseph and doesn't say anything. But then the king himself has a dream. Then the ex-prisoner who was serving the king suddenly remembers Joseph and gives the king insider information. Joseph is then brought into the palace. He rightly

interprets the king's dreams as impending bumper crops for 7 years followed by extreme famine for 7 years.

Joseph is again put in charge of all of this planning, appointed to oversee the management of the bumper crops in order to prepare for the famine. The bumper crops come, and then the agricultural disaster comes. But thanks to Joseph, they are managing in their area. The famine is so widespread that even Joseph's brothers (who live far, far away) are impacted by it and become desperate. They travel to the one place that had prepared for these lean years. They become before Joseph, a now high-ranking ruler, but they don't realize him. They bow down and beg for his mercy and his help in their crisis.

To make a really long story somewhat shorter; eventually, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. Instead of anger or retribution that most of us would probably participate in, he weeps in love for reuniting with them, and gives glory to God for how it all worked out for good. He not only offers help for their need, but completely forgives them for their earlier anger and betrayal of him. He invites them to live closer and restore this faulty family relationship.

It is a description of what God wants to do with humanity. To forgive the failure, supply the need, restore the relationship, live in closer connection with him. This story, as a metaphor for the relationship between God and his people, lifts several questions for us.

[Our way or his?] When Jesus comes to us and says he dreams of wanting to walk with us, and to lead us – do we recognize he is chosen by God and appreciate the value of his leadership in our life, or are we like the brothers who are angered by Joseph's dreams and his desire to lead, and so we sell him up the river and out of our life. **1) Do we appreciate Christ's rule or resent it?**

[Whose purposes?] Wherever we are at as we journey through our life, there God is, and he is always rising to the top. What are we going to do about that? Will we notice it, and then try to use him selfishly for our own wrong purposes, as did the lady of the house try to use Joseph? And when he refuses to be used for improper purposes, like the lady of the house, will we then turn around and try to blame him and punish him and his reputation for what we did? **2) Do we serve his purposes or ours? Or even better, can we align our purposes with Christ's purposes so that they are one and the same?**

[Forget or Remember?] Again, Joseph rises to the top and simply asks that we remember him. When our personal crisis is over, do we remember what he did for

us? Or like the man in the prison cell, promising to remember but forgetting, will we forget how he has helped us when our crisis ends? **3) Do we remember or forget Christ's help?**

[He forgives (anyway)] Then suddenly something triggers to life a distant, faded memory. And through all of this anger and ignoring and forgetting and suffering and passion we inflict on God; in the end, he weeps and embraces us and forgives us (for we know not what we do) and gives us what we need because he so wants us to be a part of his family. And that is good news.

But we need to tell one more story today. It was written to clarify a long-standing misunderstanding. In ancient religious history, almost all gods were restricted to geo-political borders. "So the god of Michigan stops at the Michigan border, or the god of America stops at the American border, or wherever the nation and its borders lined up, that is where god's rule ended for that god." The wider the borders, the stronger the nation, the more powerful was that god. It led to a twisted version of the old cliché, "my god is bigger than your god." "Yeah, well my god can beat up your god" and let the games begin with the results: We are in and you are out. We get grace and you get justice. We get help and you don't. We are us and you are them. We are forgiven and you are doomed... you get the idea, right?

[God isn't "us and them"] So, good 'ol Jonah takes to the sea but goes the opposite way. Why? Because there are *his* people, God's people; and then there is everyone else in the world. And much to Jonah's unhappiness he is sent to NOT his own people. The Ninevites were "everyone else". They didn't qualify. He knew that God is gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love – except when he says it after the salvation of the repenting Ninevites, Jonah spits the words like they are a nasty accusation. "We knew you were compassionate, "we hate that!" How can you, how dare you, forgive *those* people – FOR those people who are "not us" people. Jonah is angry because God is not provincial, because God is not tied to a local favorite. As Barry put it: The Creator is universal, and that means that neighbor for which you want revenge and want God to avenge for you -- is also one of his beloved children -- that he created and wants to be in a relationship with.



So, God teaches Jonah a lesson. You heard the reading -- After Jonah marched through that town and preached gloom and doom and destruction, then he went

outside that town to see what would happen to the city. It was hot. He made a shelter, but it didn't help much. God grew a leafy plant that gave him shade from the heat and Jonah was happy. The next day God sent a worm and that ate the plant and a blistering heat that withered the plant, and no more shade and Jonah was angry (and probably suffering from heat exhaustion). Then God said, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

And this defiant, only-worried-about-he-and-his Jonah said, "Yes, I do have a right to be angry, I am so angry I want to die!"

The Lord said, "You are concerned about a single plant that you had nothing to do with, should I not be concerned about the needs of a people whom I created and have everything to do with -- who live as a massive population along with all its animals? And that is how the book ends. With a question. The author is putting the question not to Jonah, but to the readers who are reading the story -- and to us -- who have now heard the story, in brief)

And so the next question is **4) Who should God care about? and should we not care about who God cares about?** And by the time we have reached this part of the story, the question is supposed to be rhetorical when that question comes.

[God cares for more than those who are "in the light"] After all, He is not the creator of some and not others. God's care is not limited only to those who are already "in the light". All people are God's, and he wants friendship with all. God has chosen, befriended, and called us to be light -- not because we are better or more redeemable or earned it or live within the right borders or anything of those other qualifications that are not qualifications at all. He chose us as friends simply because he loves us and wants us to love him. He calls people who have come to that understanding, that light, to be light so that he can reach others who are not yet in the light. So the last question is, **5) Are we light? Or is our God connection faulty?**

And through faithful and unfaithful periods of history, and through faithful and unfaithful periods of our own life, God promises that he will always be loving, always be reaching, always be striving to draw us back, and ultimately, he draws us through Jesus Christ. He is always faithful. As Paul said in Acts, (we heard this earlier) He is close to us, so that when we (finally) seek him and reach for him, he will be right there and we will find him.

Communion

Invitation And one way we find him, or find him again, or connect with him more strongly is through the Communion table which are open to all people who seek to live in friendship with Christ. Let's prepare our hearts by a time of confession.

Confession Almighty God, we your people cry out to you on behalf of our community, of all communities: to have mercy upon all who suffer from poverty, who have lost their way. who feel forgotten and neglected. Have mercy on all of us and make us worthy to be called your people.

Assurance We remember Jesus, who believed in people and never despaired of them, who through all disappointment never lost heart. Who disregarded his own comfort and convenience and thought first of others' needs, and, though he suffered long, he was always kind. When he was reviled, he uttered no harsh word in return. When he suffered, did not threaten retaliation. He prayed for the forgiveness of those who rejected him, and for the perfecting of those who receive him. Christ will dwell in us that we will go forth with the light of hope in our eyes with faith and love in our hearts.

from portions of UM Book of Worship: Prayer "For the mind of Christ."

The Great Thanksgiving

Therefore, Lift up your heads **We lift them up to God**

Lift up your hearts **We lift them up to the Lord**

Lift up your hands **We dedicate our heads, our hearts, and our hands to the worship of God.**

We offer our entire being to the God of Creation, who made the sun and the moon to govern by day and by night and hung the stars in the sky. We offer our entire being to the great God who hollowed out the valleys and bulged up the mountains, who spat out the seven seas, and populated the world with glorious creatures. Blessed be the name of the Lord who created us and fashioned us from the dust and breathed into us the breath of life. So let's praise the Lord together for this by singing

Confession and Great Thanksgiving adapted from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/a-new-great-thanksgiving-for-eastertide>.

Bless His Holy Name

Words and Music: Andraé Crouch, © 1973 Bud John Songs, Inc.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

He has done great things, he has done great things,

he has done great things, bless his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

Blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who came to us in spite of our destructive ways. He healed the sick, raised the dead and cast out demons. In the brief time that he was with us, Jesus sided with the oppressed, had compassion for those who suffer, and gave dignity to women and children. He taught us in word and deed about a God we had been unable to understand.

In spite of his glory-revealing presence among us, we turned him into a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Jesus was persecuted by certain religious leaders and betrayed by one of his own. He was lied about, tortured, and hung on a cross to die.

Yet, even on the day of his crucifixion, Jesus continued to teach those who would listen. When evil people came with his betrayer, Jesus did not respond with violence, choosing instead to remind us that those who live by the sword will die by the sword. When he was falsely accused and condemned to death, Jesus refused to do harm. And while hanging on the cross, he prayed: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But we give you thanks that nothing ever was, or ever will be, able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Early on the morning of the third day Jesus laughed at death, shed his grave clothes, and walked among us alive! Forty days later, he ascended into heaven, where he is seated at the right hand of the God of our ancestors. Our eyes are turned toward the skies looking for the day when Jesus shall return to a kingdom without end, where the lion will lie down peaceably with the lamb, where sickness and disease are not known, where the wicked will cease from troubling, and we will study war no more! We receive these gifts in praise and thanksgiving as we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

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

Holy God, pour out your Spirit upon these gifts of bread and cup; make them be for us the body and blood of Christ. Wonder-working God, pour out your Spirit upon us; as we offer ourselves to be God's presence in the world until Jesus returns in glory.

The Bread and Cup

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, He shared a meal with his disciples. He took bread from the table, gave thanks to God, and gave it to his disciples saying: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."



When the meal was over, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to his disciples saying: "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."

Prayer Today, Jesus, we remember the bread and the cup. we remember your life and your death. We remember your resurrection; we remember eternal life. Amen.

Music Communion reminds us that by Jesus we are saved and graced into a relationship with God, and he is seeking to forgive and bless *all* people who seek him. Therefore let's stand if comfortable and sing our closing song – and we are going to use the suggested alternate tune -- the tune of Angels From the Realms of Glory and Easter People Raise Your Voices

66 (vv 1,2) Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven

(tune: Angels, From the Realms / Easter People Raise Your Voices)

Words: Henry F. Lyte, 1834, Music: Henry T Smart, 1867

1. Praise, my soul, the King of heaven, to the throne thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, evermore God's praises sing.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise the everlasting King.
2. Praise the Lord for grace and favor to all people in distress;
praise God, still the same as ever, slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Glorious now God's faithfulness.

Blessing Now as a child of the Father, as Christ's friend, go out to the world in the power of the Spirit -- with your heart set on Christ who draws all people to himself and binds us together in love. Amen.