

LORD JESUS, YOU SHALL BE MY SONG

Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song (ELW 808)

Jésus, Je Voudrais te Chanter

English

- 1 Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey;
I'll tell ev'rybody about you wherever I go:
you alone are our life and our peace and our love.
Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey.
- 2 Lord Jesus, I'll praise you as long as I journey.
May all of my joy be a faithful reflection of you.
May the earth and the sea and the sky join my song.
Lord Jesus, I'll praise you as long as I journey.
- 3 As long as I live, Jesus, make me your servant,
to carry your cross and to share all your burdens
and tears.
For you saved me by giving your body and blood.
As long as I live, Jesus, make me your servant.
- 4 I fear in the dark and the doubt of my journey;
but courage will come with the sound of your
steps by my side.
And with all of the family you saved by your love,
we'll sing to your dawn at the end of our journey.

French

- 1 Jésus, je voudrais te chanter sur ma route;
Jésus, je voudrais t'annoncer à mes voisins partout,
car toi seul es la vie et la paix et l'amour:
Jésus, je voudrais te chanter sur ma route.
- 2 Jésus, je voudrais te louer sur ma route;
Jésus, je voudrais que ma voix soit l'écho de ta joie,
et que chante la terre et que chante le ciel;
Jésus, je voudrais te louer sur ma route.
- 3 Jésus, je voudrais te servir sur ma route,
Jésus, je voudrais partager les souffrances de
ta croix,
car tu livres pour moi et ton corps et ton sang;
Jésus, je voudrais te servir sur ma route.
- 4 Jésus, je voudrais tout au long de ma route,
entendre tes pas résonner dans la nuit près
de moi,
jusqu'à l'aube du jour où ton peuple sauvé,
Jésus, chantera ton retour sur ma route.

Text: Les Petites Soeurs de Jésus and L'Arche Community; tr. Stephen Somerville, b. 1931

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Wednesday, February 14

Ash Wednesday

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

Jesus instructs his listeners to go pray in private. He tells them, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them." This sentiment has been very popular among Protestants. We have a deep, but quiet faith. And yet, if we look at the hymn for this week, we see the author wanting to sing openly and publicly to the Lord. The songwriter says, "I'll tell everybody about you wherever I go." So, which is it? What does God want us to do? Perhaps Jesus' instructions are meant to free us from having to prove our "Christian" identity. We don't have to pray in public because God already sees what we need. He sets us free from having to prove ourselves through some kind of identity. We are who we are because of Jesus Christ, not because we look like "Christians."

Lord, you know our hearts' desires and our human needs even before we do. Open us up to the endless possibilities of living in your divine freedom, both in our public and in our private lives. Amen.

Thursday, February 15

1 Peter 3:18–22

There are a lot of thoughts packed into this brief passage in Peter's letter! One idea points to Jesus' descent into hell. Peter does not quite say it that way. He speaks of Christ making a "proclamation to the spirits in prison." This is an episode in Jesus' life that Protestants don't think about much. But Christians, especially in the Middle Ages, interpreted this to mean that Jesus himself descended into hell in order to trample on the head of Satan and free all those stuck in Satan's realm. This "harrowing of hell" shows that in the two days that Jesus was dead, he was not motionless or out of commission, but in fact, doing the unbelievably hopeful and dangerous work of freeing all those who find themselves separated from God. For, as Julian of Norwich has put it, God makes sure that "not one thing made shall ever be lost."

Jesus our brother, thank you for not abandoning us to human evil or Satan. Thank you for going where we are terrified to go, and for rescuing all those who find themselves in the grips of hell. You and only you, are the Lord of all reality. Amen.

Friday, February 16

Mark 1:9–15

We are used to celebrating Jesus' baptism as that lovely day when the heavens open up and God praises God's Son for all to see. However, according to Mark, Jesus' baptism celebration was a whiplash of a day. It seems that in the morning, Jesus celebrated the beautiful sacrament of baptism and was given a strong affirmation by his Father. But by the afternoon, he seems to have been banished to the desert! What's more, he had to contend with wild beasts and Satan while he was there. This could not have been fun. With these stories of Jesus in heaven, in hell, and in the desert, the New Testament authors show us that there is no place where Christ is not. He is both the eternal, cosmic Savior and the typical human being standing right in front of us. There is no place where Jesus Christ is too afraid or too weak to go.

Jesus our brother, from the desert to the cross to hell, you go where we are terrified to go. You go there to show us that you will never leave us alone or abandon us. We praise you for your strength and courage, and most of all, for your eternal faithfulness to us. Amen.

Saturday, February 17

"Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song" (ELW 808)

This hymn paints a picture of the Christian pilgrim walking along the journey of life. Along the way, the songwriter is belting out a full-throated song to Jesus Christ. Evolutionary biology studies suggest that humans sing when their brains depict that a task is difficult, or when the brain needs a rest from the activities that it is doing. Perhaps Jesus sang a lot. After all, his short life was full of trials. Whether the biologists are right or not, life is hard, so we should sing! Even if the song isn't happy, we can sing. Our singing is a way to carry Jesus with us. It avoids the boastful prayers in public, but it coaxes us out of our closets so that we are not alone in our faith. The divine community of God surrounds us always, no matter where we find ourselves. Let us sing!

Lord, help me sing when I cannot sing! And when I can, Lord, thank you for giving me a voice to sing to you and to the amazing works you have done for all of humanity and for me. Amen.

Sunday, February 18

“Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” (ELW 808)

The songwriter makes a vital point in this hymn. It is this: Jesus Christ saves us all. Us all. That means no exceptions. And we are not saved by terror or violence. Nor are we saved by anger or fright. Nor are we saved by the wrath of God or the suffering of Jesus. We are saved by love and love alone. Love is the saving energy that God brings into the world. Love is the powerful energy that Jesus takes with him to proclaim to the spirits in prison. Love is the protective energy of the angels who tend to Jesus in the desert. Love, not shame, turns our faces back to the shining face of God. Jesus' saving power fills the cosmos and every corner of the earth, so that through the ups and downs of our lives we are never alone. Let us sing!

Lord, I may not understand why you want to save us all, even those who have inflicted pain and suffering on others. Lord, help us to see that even in your love for all, there will be justice for those who have suffered here on earth. Help us to see that your love is greater and deeper than any love we mortals can imagine. We praise you! Amen.

Monday, February 19

Genesis 17:1–7, 15–17

Are you familiar with the abbreviation #ROFL? It stands for “Rolling On the Floor, Laughing.” God showed up and repeated the covenantal promise to Abraham that his descendants would be exceedingly numerous. And Abraham—now 99 years old, with a 90-year-old wife—“fell on his face and laughed.” Abraham #ROFL.

Abraham simply did not believe that God could or would keep the promise. But here is the thing about promises: What matters is whether the promise-maker can and will keep the promise. God, miraculously, was able to keep the promise. And God, faithfully, did keep the promise. And the promise wasn't just to Abraham, but particularly it was to Sarah. God was not content to leave Sarah out of the covenant. And so 90-year-old Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Abraham and Sarah were both #ROFL.

In fact, all of us are #ROFL. As Sarah said, “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.”

God of joy, turn our disbelieving laughter into the surprised joy of faith. Teach us to laugh with Sarah and Abraham and all whom you bless. Amen.

Tuesday, February 20

Psalm 22:23–31

When was the last time that you threw a dinner party to celebrate some direct experience of God's salvation or blessing? Leviticus 7:11–15 describes a meal people were to throw in moments of thanksgiving. Deuteronomy 14 toward the end describes annual feasts of thanksgiving that people would throw. And note, they were to remember to include the Levitical priests, the orphans, the widows, and the "resident aliens" (displaced persons).

The author of Psalm 22 had experienced God's salvation: God "did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him." The psalmist then says: "The poor shall eat and be satisfied" (22:26a). The psalmist may have merely been describing God's characteristic abundance. But it is likely that the psalmist was throwing a thanksgiving meal in response to having experienced God's mercy and deliverance—and he was including the poor. Next time you throw a dinner party, remember the poor and the hungry. If you can't invite them, remember them in other ways.

Merciful Savior, we thank you for all the ways that you deliver us from evil and give us our daily bread. May all the world know your love; may all be clothed and fed. Amen.

Wednesday, February 21

Romans 4:13–25

Writing to the church in Rome, Paul said, "For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith." God had made a promise (really a set of promises) to Abraham. At times, Abraham disobeyed God—doubted God—and even laughed at God's promises. But in the end, Abraham trusted God's promises. And that trust—that faith—made all the difference.

That is the way it is with a promise. When someone makes you a promise, you either trust the promise or you do not trust the promise. The only way to receive a promise is to trust it (or not).

And here is God's promise to you: In Jesus Christ, God accepts you, loves you, forgives you, and claims you as God's very own child. Believe that promise. Trust it.

Triune God, you promise us that we belong to you. We trust you—strengthen our trust. Hold on to us when we doubt, disobey, or dismiss you. Forgive us and cling to us for Christ's sake. Amen.

Thursday, February 22

Mark 8:31–38

The assigned gospel reading occurs in Mark's Gospel immediately after Peter was the first person to say to Jesus, "You are the Messiah."

This passage is normally known as the first "passion prediction." Jesus says, "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

I don't love the title "passion prediction." I prefer the language that the Gospel of Mark uses: Jesus "began to teach them . . ." In this and two other passages, Jesus was teaching the disciples what it meant for him to be the Messiah. These are "Teachings about the Crucified Messiah." To be the Messiah means not to be served, but to serve. Not to command, but to obey. Not to kill, but to be crucified for our sake. And not to stay dead, but to be raised so that all might have life.

Dear Crucified and Risen Lord, put to death all our self-serving desires to rule and to be served. Raise us up to new life in you. Amen.

Friday, February 23

Mark 8:31–38

In the first half of the assigned gospel reading, Jesus says: "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." In response to this (good!) news, Peter rebuked Jesus. And Jesus, in turn, rebuked Peter: "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." And then, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

So here is the central problem with the gospel: the cross. Both Jesus' cross. And the crosses that Jesus calls us all to take up as we follow him.

Why would anyone worship a God that suffers and dies? Why would anyone follow such a God? Why? Because the Crucified Christ—and no other—is alone the true God.

Blessed Savior, when you call us to follow you, you call us also to die to ourselves. Give us the courage to follow you every day, to carry our crosses with humility and strength. Amen.

Saturday, February 24

“Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” (ELW 808)

Our theme hymn chosen for our Lenten reflection is one of my favorite new hymns, “Lord Jesus, You Shall be My Song as I Journey.”

The metaphor of Jesus as “my song as I journey” is new and provocative. The psalms generally have very concrete metaphors for God: shepherd, rock, light, fortress, refuge, and the like. John goes further and says that Jesus is the Word.

This hymn creatively moves beyond Jesus as the Word and says, “You shall be my song as I journey.” The hymn then describes Jesus as a song of life, a song of peace, a song of love. Jesus as our song provokes us to think about the melodies and tunes that we hum or whistle. It invites us to reflect on the “ear worms” that are playing in the background of our thoughts. How do those tunes and melodies become our Jesus as we travel?

Lord, you are our song, sing to us. Play in our hearts and minds the music of eternity. Let our lives sing your song of forgiveness. Amen.

Sunday, February 25

“Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” (ELW 808, Verse 1)

A few years ago, I realized that I always have an “ear worm” playing in the back of my consciousness—a song “stuck” in my head.

But what do you do when the song that is stuck in your head is an awful tune, one that drives you crazy? You know, like the Kars 4 Kids ad tune.

In Greek mythology, the most dangerous “ear worm” singers were the sirens, whose song would lure sailors to their deaths. Odysseus avoided the sirens by stuffing wax in his sailors’ ears. But Orpheus had a better solution—he pulled out his harp and sang a more beautiful song.

That’s how you defeat an ear worm! You sing a more beautiful song. And what better song is there than Jesus himself: “Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey.” With Jesus figuratively and literally as our song, we have nothing to fear from the deadliest siren or ear worm.

Lord Jesus, may we sing your love each morning, your grace each day, and your forgiveness every evening. Surround us with your beauty. Amen.

Monday, February 26

Exodus 20:1–17

On this Monday morning we look forward to the third Sunday in Lent as we survey all the readings and hymns that the lectionary brings to us this week. The hymn for this week lifts up our theme, "May all of my joy be a faithful reflection of you. May the earth and the sea and the sky join my song." That is the disciple's prayer, that we may be "a faithful reflection of you, Lord."

The LORD gave the people of Israel a concrete way to reflect the image of God to the world. We see it in our reading for today in Exodus 20. God spoke the words of Law and Promise to the people from the top of Mt. Sinai. These promises show us the heart of God. When we walk in these promises we reflect the heart of God.

God of Promise, may we be students of your Word. May our lives reflect your heart as we love you and love our neighbors, just as you taught us. Amen.

Tuesday, February 27

Psalm 19

The other night I walked outside my front door and was overwhelmed with the brilliance of the full moon. It was nestled amongst some clouds that framed it with glowing glory. That scene popped into my mind as I read Psalm 19 today.

The light of the full moon connects to this text in two ways. First, the psalmist begins by proclaiming that the heavens are telling of the glory of God. The psalmist focuses on the glory of the sun in its daily pattern. Yet, the moon is more like us. It has no light of its own, but when it is fully facing the sun it is brilliant.

Second, the moon shines in the midst of darkness. The second half of Psalm 19 talks about how the psalmist is surrounded by the lawless, but he knows that if he follows the Word of the LORD, he will continue to reflect God's glory.

God of Promise, give us the wisdom to focus on your Word today. Give us the strength to keep the course and not be distracted by all the voices that surround us and seek to pull our attention away from you. Amen.

Wednesday, February 28

1 Corinthians 1:18–25

In our readings this week we see people who are trying to stay focused on the LORD, reflecting the light of God, while surrounded by people who want to pull them away. The Israelites received the Law from Mt. Sinai so that they would not follow the ways of the Canaanites. The psalmist looked to the heavens and to the Law as a compass pointing to God.

Today we read the words of the Apostle Paul. He was preaching a message that was hard for people to understand. First, he said that Jesus, the Son of God, was crucified, buried, and rose from the dead. Second, he said that the kingdom of God is for all people, not only for the children of Israel. The Greeks thought he was a lunatic. The Jewish leaders thought he was a heretic. Paul was surrounded by opponents and probably felt outnumbered. He needed to keep his eyes on Jesus' promises in order to reflect the love of God to all people.

God of Promise, it is sometimes difficult to stay faithful when people around us misunderstand us and falsely accuse us. Give us strength and courage today to reflect the love that you showed us on the cross. Amen.

Thursday, February 29

John 2:13–22

Today we read the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple. Note that the Gospel of John places this story at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. It follows immediately after the story of Jesus turning the water into wine at the wedding in Cana. In that story Jesus shows God's abundance and joy. Now in today's reading Jesus enters the Temple in Jerusalem. This place was supposed to be the reflection of God's abundance and joy—to be a light for the nations. Instead, Jesus found the Temple full of greedy merchants who exploited the weak to make a profit.

Jesus must have felt like David when he wrote Psalm 19. He is surrounded by people who have forgotten God's words of Law and Promise. Jesus knew that the Temple had to be cleansed if it would ever be able to reflect God's light to the world.

God of Promise, search our hearts today. Help us to see the ways that we are like those merchants in the Temple. Drive out the things in our hearts that dull the light of your love for the world. Amen.

Friday, March 1

John 2:13–22

The religious leaders were upset with Jesus for disrupting their business as usual. "What gives you the authority to do these things?" they asked. "Show us a sign." Jesus responded with perplexing words. "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up." What?!? The temple took 46 years to build. Who does this guy think he is?

We learn two important things from this story. First, the Temple is not a building. It is a body. John tells us that Jesus was talking about his own bodily resurrection. His resurrected body is the true Temple, and we, his disciples, are members of that resurrected body. We are the Temple.

The second thing we learn is that the reflection of God's light comes through the movements of the body, not through the rituals of a building. Jesus drove out the greed of the people and demonstrated love and forgiveness through his death and resurrection. Together, we are invited to be that living Temple and reflection of God's light to the world.

God of Promise, thank you that Jesus has revealed the true Temple of God. Help us to never forget that we are part of the body of Christ and called to reflect God's light to the world. Amen.

Saturday, March 2

"Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song" (ELW 808)

Life is a journey. It is full of ups and downs, twists and turns, exhilaration and disappointment. Sometimes we follow the Word of the LORD and it feels amazing. Sometimes we get distracted by the people or things around us that pull us away from God.

The author of this hymn reflects the reality of life in each verse. Verse 1 begins with hope as we seek to sing the song of Jesus to the world. Verse 2 steps into full praise mode. Verse 3 seems to show the stumble in the journey. Our call is not to pride, but to servanthood and cross-bearing. Verse 4 takes us to the darkness of doubt and fear and fills us with courage that, even in that low place, God is with us.

We reflect the light of God, not through our perfection and perpetual brightness. No. We reflect the light of God when we remember that God's love is faithful throughout all our journey.

God of Promise, we thank you for the ups and downs of our lives. Thank you for being with us through it all. May we never forget that you are with us and for us. Amen.

Sunday, March 3

“Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” (ELW 808, Verse 2)

We began this week with the moon. Its light is a reflection of the sun. When the moon is fully facing the sun it illuminates the darkness. The second verse of our hymn seems like a song of the moon. “May all of my joy be a faithful reflection of you. May the earth and the sea and the sky join my song.”

Here’s what I love about the light of the moon. Its brilliance is not reliant on the moon’s ability to produce energy. The only thing the moon has to do is face the sun.

Think about this. Stop and meditate on God’s unconditional and steadfast love for us demonstrated through the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Let that reality soak in. Let the light of God’s love wash over you.

Look, your joy is reflecting God. When others look at you, they can see the brilliance of God’s love for them illuminating the darkness.

God of Promise, words cannot contain the height, depth, breadth of your love for us. May our lives be a reflection of your love for everyone we meet this week. Amen.

Monday, March 4

Numbers 21:4–9

God’s story and God’s people have always been on the move, going somewhere. Along their journey the Israelites found that things were not as they imagined they would be, and their patience was tested. They were tired, crabby, angry, and doubtful. They cried out, complained, and blamed. God responded, as always. God responded because the Israelites were God’s beloved.

In 2024, we are on the move as well. Navigating next steps, seeking to find ourselves in God’s narrative, and hoping to make sense of our own stories that are at the heart of our daily journey. Just like those who have gone before us, our exhaustion, hunger, crabbiness, anger, and doubt cause us to cry out, complain, and blame. Our cries evoke a response from God because we too are God’s beloved. The Lenten season and this story invite our return to God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

God of mercy and love, when we are impatient and angry because things are not going how we imagined, remind us that there is another way, another space to lean into. Help us to breathe and give us strength and patience to recognize your constant gracious presence. Amen.

Tuesday, March 5

Psalm 107:1–3, 17–22

Once again in today's psalm we find ourselves wandering. Starting with thanksgiving, we acknowledge the Lord and the ways in which God has fully engaged in the journey of God's people. In a response of gratitude, the psalmist reminds us that God, our Creator, is the redeemer. In the broken places, where sickness, distress, death, and destruction hovered, God gathered up God's people from all directions. God pulled them in and held them together, not just as individuals, but also as a community.

Verses 1 and 22 of the psalm are like bookends that remind God's beloved to respond with thanksgiving and songs of joy. What are ways in which God has restored and healed you? As you ponder this question, you are invited this day to lift up words or prayers of thanksgiving, gratitude, and perhaps even sing a song of joy!

Healing God, we give thanks for the places you have gathered us in, held us together, and reminded us that we are deeply loved. As we serve in the world, help our words to be healing, loving, and kind to all those with whom we share the journey this day. Amen.

Wednesday, March 6

Ephesians 2:1–10

It cannot feel very good to start off with the announcement "you were dead"! Yet, as we move through the following verses, we come to see why the people were dead because of their trespasses, and how they have now been redeemed by God's grace. Ultimately, death is separation from God—a disconnection from our Creator caused by our sin. Thank goodness the story doesn't end there! Jesus was and is the re-connector, by God's grace restoring what has been broken. Even though we were dead, bound together with Christ we have been saved by grace. Grace is the healing balm between death and life. Grace allows us the freedom to know we are going to be okay. Even though we mess things up, God's work in us by grace is there to create in and for us a new future that fits God's promises.

Gracious God, forgive us when we make mistakes and hurt others. Grace us with all that we need to restore what has been broken. Amen.

Thursday, March 7

John 3:14–21

Today we begin with a flashback. Jesus reaches into the past to remind Nicodemus of the Moses story, recalling the serpent in the wilderness which by God's promise was lifted up in order to save the people from death. Now Jesus states that by God's promise he too will be lifted up to save people from death. Jesus' narrative propels him forward to show us he is the great link between what was, what is, and what is yet to come. As his crucifixion nears in our Lenten story, he points to the purpose and end of that story. The Good News for today is that Jesus came to demonstrate God's love for the world. It's been that way since the beginning, when God created everything. The love God has for God's people has always been at the heart and center of all God does—past, present, and future.

God of all times and places, lift up what we need to hear, to see, to feel, to embrace, and to love. Help us in the times, places, and opportunities for love, to raise up and build up your people. Strengthen us for the journey. Amen.

Friday, March 8

John 3:14–21

It takes courage and a willingness to admit our brokenness. Light reveals the ways in which we have fallen short, hurt others, and lived only for ourselves. We might find it much easier and more comfortable just to hide in the darkness, because sometimes the light feels like judgment. But when we are honest and vulnerable about ourselves, we are convicted. Because of God's grace we are given another chance—and then another, and another. That is what God's love does for us; it creates new beginnings in us. Death and darkness do not have the last word. God loves the world, wants the very best for the world, and has such abundant grace and compassion for the world that God sent God's only Son to be lifted up in order that we might have new life.

God of light, may we use today to examine the ways which have separated us from you. Help us to be vulnerable and brave and with all that we are, return to you and your forgiving grace. Amen.

Saturday, March 9

“Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” (ELW 808)

Journey, route, path, road. All of these words remind us of the walk we are on with Jesus. From the moment we are born we are on the move, made to be in relationship with God and each other. Like our biblical ancestors, on this journey of life our bodies carry us, our minds engage us, and our spirits connect us to the sacred song of God’s presence. This is important, so that we may be assured that Christ, who journeys alongside us, gives us courage to face our fears and provides opportunities daily to love all people and all things. The Holy Spirit is the accompanying tune, who shows us the direction of where we were, where we are, and where we’re going. With each step, we are invited to listen. Jesus is our song.

Moving Jesus, be our song. Remind us you are with us on our journey, loving and helping us to sing whatever our hearts yearn for in this time. Remind us that you are as close as our breath. Amen.

Sunday, March 10

“Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” (ELW 808, Verse 3)

Verse three of “Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” invites, beckons, and draws us into the ways we live as servants of Jesus. Sharing the space of suffering, burdens, and tears with others is how we connect to him. The Good News is that Jesus’ saving act on the cross has already been accomplished for us. Now we are invited to continue to lean into, embrace, and respond to Christ’s deep love for the world on each step of our life’s journey. Today, as we get ready to sing with a servant heart, inhale, hold space, and exhale, ready to enter into all that is to come. As we sing even in the midst of our own and others’ suffering, burdens, and tears, we also sing expecting to be restored, lifted up, and have our tears wiped away. In our journey with Jesus, the song carries and reminds us we are not alone. Our servant heart beats with a rhythm that leads us to love.

Thank you, Jesus, for the gift of song. Help us to lean into whatever melodies or rhythms we need to pay attention to in this day and time. May love always lead us in our song. Amen.

Monday, March 11

Jeremiah 31:31–34

The heart's journey is a pronounced theme of this week of Lenten readings. "The days are surely coming" sets our eyes on the horizon of the Lenten pathway. Culminating the trek is a new covenant. But remember: In liturgical time, we've only heard about this covenant. We've not yet witnessed it come to fruition. Thus, we journey with anticipation for something coming—expectant, longing, hoping-against-hope.

It is a covenant of good news! From the least to the greatest, all will know the Holy One, whose law will be written within, on our hearts. A deep belonging bestowed, with God and with one another as our lives are bound up in the life of God. Forgiveness, restoration. This is the good news spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. But at the outset of this week on the Lenten journey, these are words of something to come. So, we travel on with longing hearts.

Holy One, we long to know you more. Journey with us into the unknown pathways of our lives, and through this Lenten season, for we know something truly good is coming. We trek toward you with longing hearts. Amen.

Tuesday, March 12

Psalms 51:1–12

Luther, Melancthon, and the early reformers were pastorally very concerned about the hearts of Christians when it came to sin. Of primary concern in Article XX of the Augsburg Confession is the consolation and encouragement of "anxious consciences" and "terrified minds" that were "vexed by the doctrine of works" but hearing no "consolation from the gospel." You can hear the "anxious conscience" and "terrified mind" of the psalmist. The writer pines over iniquity, transgressions, and sin. "I was born guilty!"

But read the psalm's first line again. This quintessential psalm of confession, prayed the world over by those beset by failures and shortcomings, begins with trust in the love and mercy of God. In your journey through this season of repentance, make time to unburden your heart in confession. But do so with the consolation of God's mercy and love as your opening refrain, and the joy of salvation your "Amen."

Merciful and loving God, who desires for me truth and wisdom, joy and gladness, create in me a clean heart, a renewed and willing spirit, and restore to me the joy of your salvation. Amen.

Wednesday, March 13

Hebrews 5:5–10

Nowhere in the liturgical year does the journey of Jesus become more emotional than in Lent. "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears." Our hearts too journey with Jesus through the valley of this season. While shadowed by cries and tears portending a terrible day of suffering ahead for Jesus—and for us, in this liturgical time—Lent also offers signs of light and hope ahead.

This passage from Hebrews is one such sign. Read in the thick of the Lenten shadows, we hear: "You are my Son, today I have begotten you." "You are a priest forever." "He became the source of eternal salvation." We'll need these signs of light and hope to hold onto, just as we do when we move through life's many shadowy seasons, so that we are not overwhelmed completely.

Holy One, who is able to save from death, hear our prayers and supplications, our loud cries and tears, just as you heard those of Jesus, our high priest and source of salvation. Reveal to us the small sources of light and hope as we travel through the shadows, now and in the days to come. Amen.

Thursday, March 14

John 12:20–33

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus," said the Greeks to the disciples. It's a curious scene, occurring just after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem in the verses prior. As the Pharisees say in the verse just before this passage, the Greeks' request is a sign that the whole world is now going after Jesus. But why did they wish to see Jesus? We aren't told. In fact, when Jesus learns of the Greeks' wish to see him, he moves into a monologue: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified..."

Metaphorically, the Greeks are a symbol of the reach of salvation into the Gentiles. But in our story, there were some Greeks who journeyed up to worship at the festival. And they wanted to see Jesus. If you could imagine your way into this festival scene, why do you suppose they wanted to see Jesus that day?

God, through the darkness of the Lenten veil, we too wish to see Jesus. We make this journey—longing, anticipating, hoping-against-hope—that at the end, we will meet him, lifted up from the earth, drawing all people to himself. Amen.

Friday, March 15

John 12:20–33

We return to Jesus with a troubled soul. He has spoken the truth! That unless a grain of wheat falls and dies, it remains only a single seed. That those who love their life lose it. That whoever serves him must follow him. But these truths don't ward off the pending trouble. And now it troubles his very own soul. Unlike in Mark's Gospel, Jesus doesn't ask to be saved from this hour. Instead, coming to this hour might be a way of his glorifying the name of God.

When the voice of the Divine responds, all the crowd heard it. Some say it's thunder. Others an angel speaking. The voice was for the crowd's sake. But when the Holy speaks, they cannot all perceive it as the voice of God. On this Lenten journey our hearts are being prepared through lingering in stillness and shadow to perceive anew the good news for which we anxiously await.

O God, should you speak to us in the quiet of our hearts or in thunderous peals, prepare our hearts and open our ears so that we may perceive you rightly and follow you wholly. Amen.

Saturday, March 16

"Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song" (ELW 808)

This beautiful hymn is a creation of the Little Sisters of Jesus and the L'Arche communities. The Little Sisters are a contemplative order, dedicated to living and working alongside those on the margins of society, often among nomadic peoples. L'Arche is a global network of people both with and without intellectual disabilities, living, working, and worshipping together in intentional community. Reading again the hymn's lyrics, with knowledge of the communities that produced it, helps us to see the journey described not just as metaphor for "life's journey," but as our actually traveling alongside others in need of companionship.

The hymn portrays Jesus as the focus of our journey. But companionship with others along the way of Christ is the life of discipleship. Taking inspiration from the Little Sisters and L'Arche, with whom do you need to make this journey through Lent, and through life? Who needs you to come alongside them?

Jesus, you are our journey's origin and its end. Be now our joy, our song, our life, our peace. For with you we share all burdens and tears. Amen.

Sunday, March 17

“Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” (ELW 808, Verse 4)

The final verse of our theme hymn begins: “I fear in the dark and the doubt of my journey.” This is a helpful refrain as we move into the final week of Lent. Fear, doubt, shadows, and uncertainty fill this season, in scripture and song. We too may live with fear and doubt, shadow and uncertainty, this season and in many seasons of life.

The hymn hopes for courage—“courage will come,” but not just yet—with the sound of Jesus’ steps by our side, as our companion on the journey. Singing of a dawn to come, with family saved by the love of Christ, even at the end. Lent’s end is near. But other ends come unannounced, unexpected. Lenten spirituality offers us a way to prepare for myriad endings, feeling the dark and doubt in liturgical time, so that when they arrive at other times, we may be prepared to sing toward a new dawn.

O God, though we fear through dark and doubt, be our light and our courage. Until our journey draws to its end, let us sing your dawn throughout the earth. Amen.

Monday, March 18

Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. These lines can be easy to gloss over since there is so much to dwell upon in this psalm, but what incredible news! Not only is God good, but God’s love endures, and we should feel secure in that, even when we face trials and tribulations. We do not have a fickle God who tires of us, nor do we have a God that is indifferent to our lives. We have a God who is interested in us and who seeks a relationship with us. We have a God who literally took on human flesh, suffered, and died for us. As we prepare to celebrate Easter soon, we need to make sure that this does not feel commonplace or taken for granted. This is incredible news indeed. Praise be to God!

Ever-loving God, we thank you for your enduring and steadfast love. We pray that you continue to walk with us, guide us, and love us even when we stumble. Amen.

Tuesday, March 19

Mark 11:1-11

What must it have been like to run this particular errand for Jesus? Is Jesus really telling two of his followers to run ahead into the town, steal a horse, and bring it back? Jesus clarifies by instructing them that if anyone asks about it, just say that Jesus said to do it, but they will bring it back soon. How many times in our lives do we do things that we do not fully understand but feel convicted to do? How many times have we done things because Jesus has commanded it, but it looks like foolishness to others?

Love our enemies? Nonsense. Give away our hard-earned money to the poor? Foolishness! We may not be stealing a horse for Jesus, but we do things because Jesus has told us to, and these commands do indeed have a larger purpose, even if they look like foolishness to the world.

Give us the strength to follow your words, dear God, even when the world, or perhaps even we, do not fully understand them. Amen.

Wednesday, March 20

Isaiah 50:4-9a

This passage reminds me of the common phrase: "Don't shoot the messenger!" The servant, who is speaking, is tasked with giving a weary people a word to sustain them. Yet, despite this seeming like a message that would be welcomed, it is not. The servant's words are met with resistance and the narrative starts to sound like a lament. We will see this rejection of God's Word again in the Easter story. The Word of God is often rejected, and those who proclaim it are ridiculed or mocked. Yet, even with the hardships that the servant faces, he stands confident. It is not confidence in himself, but in God and God's ability to help and sustain him. "It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me. Who will condemn me?"

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for your continued help and love. We pray that you continue to be the source of our confidence and hope even during a time of trial. Amen.

Thursday, March 21

Psalm 31:9–16

The wonderful thing about the psalms is that there is generally one to fit just about any mood or situation. In Psalm 31, things are going very poorly for the psalmist. The psalmist is dealing with a variety of unfortunate events including bodily affliction, persecution from enemies, ostracization from neighbors, and even the pain of being forgotten. But the beauty of this psalm is the utter trust the psalmist has for God and God's ability to save the psalmist from troubles. The passage begins and ends with pleas for God's mercy and protection. The conclusion comes in a beautiful petition of trust: Let your face shine on your servant; save me with your unfailing love. It is not a request to vanquish enemies but a desire to be saved by God's powerful and unfailing love.

Gracious God, let your face shine on us, and save us with your unfailing love. Help us endure and triumph over adversity and let us take comfort in you. Amen.

Friday, March 22

Philippians 2:5–11

Humility is one of the greatest attributes a person can have, but it is consistently undervalued in our society. We celebrate those who are brash and arrogant—look at that confidence! But we only need to look at Jesus Christ to see the value and the necessity of humility. Jesus Christ is God; his power is unmatched. Yet he humbled himself, taking on the burdens of his people, suffering pain and humility and finally death. In turn, he was exalted by God the Father. Compared to Christ, what do we have to be arrogant about? What do we have to boast about? I am an academic, a career in which there is no shortage of ego, but many fields have similar grounds for pride. But truly what do we have to boast about? This life is transitory, and our work will not last through the ages. Everything we have is a gift from God. We can boast only in the Lord, putting off worldly honors and praise. We should follow Christ's example of humility and love.

Gracious God, we pray that you bless us with the gift of humility and that our boasting be only in our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Saturday, March 23

“Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” (ELW 808)

In the ancient world people generally received their faith from their homeland. The Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, others all had their many gods. The early Christians were different. Their faith did not belong to a particular place, and with the rapid spread of the faith in the decades after Christ's death, Christianity did not belong to a particular people either. Christians identified as sojourners without a land. I am reminded of this fact whenever I hear this hymn. As Christians we are all travelers in this life. We do not really have a singular homeland. But wherever two or three are gathered, Christ is with us. Jesus is with us in our joys and our sufferings. He is with us as we journey.

Most loving God, thank you for being with us on this journey of life. Thank you for walking with us, supporting us in our happiness and our struggles. Amen.

Sunday, March 24

“Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” (ELW 808)

Though the choice of this as our theme hymn for Lent holds up the metaphor of a journey, I must state that I prefer to see Lent as a season rather than a journey. Though I am a millennial, I don't relish the tendency of millennials to make everything into a journey—I am on a wellness journey, a fitness journey, and so on.

Palm Sunday ushers in the final week of Lent—the final stretch. We have spent weeks preparing our hearts for Easter. Perhaps we have fasted. Perhaps we have added a spiritual practice, increased scripture reading, or deepened our prayer time. So no, for me Lent is not a journey, but by the end of it, it always feels like it has been a long season of waiting. Next week we will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a miracle like no other. Let us spend the last week of this season truly reflecting and preparing ourselves for this good news.

Gracious God, as we continue to pray and fast and prepare ourselves for the Easter miracle, sustain us and bless us. Amen.

Monday, March 25

Exodus 12:1–4, (5–10), 11–14

Like the Israelites, we are called to remember—to remember the mighty acts of God. The Israelites remembered the Passover, when God passed over their houses because of the blood of the lambs smeared on their doorposts. We Christians are called to remember, too. We remember that night in an upper room, when Jesus celebrated the feast with his disciples—Jesus, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of all. We remember the blood of Jesus, the lamb of God, who was sacrificed for us and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. We remember this, as Jesus commanded us, in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, the meal that we repeat as a reminder of God's sacrificial love for us. The blood of Jesus is for us the cause of remembrance of something we must never forget.

O God of love, who will never let us go, help us always to remember your Son, the Lamb of God, our Savior and Redeemer. Amen.

Tuesday, March 26

Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19

So much in our world is changeable, impermanent, and ephemeral. The days of our lives move along so swiftly, and it seems as though everything is passing away in a flash. We ask, why is this so—doesn't anything last anymore? This leads us to search for permanence, for stability, for those things that last and are unchangeable. The psalmist, surrounded by trials and problems of every kind, finds comfort and assurance in the constant, unchanging love of God for him: "O give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever!" (Psalm 118:1). This becomes a refrain; when the psalmist proclaims the great unchanging love of God, the people reply, "the steadfast love of God endures forever." We join with the people of Israel here, to celebrate in all things the unchanging, steadfast love of God, in the midst of a world where everything else is changing.

O God, be our constant and unchanging Rock. In the midst of all those things around us that fail and pass away—"your steadfast love indeed endures forever." Amen.

Wednesday, March 27

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

In writing to the Christians at Corinth, Paul makes a point to remind them of the Lord's Supper, and urges them not only to remember the supper, but to celebrate it and to pass it along to future generations. Already, some 25 years after that event, Paul remembers that this good news was handed on to him, just as he in turn handed it on to the Corinthians. Like the lambs' blood on the doorposts at Passover, the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are a repeated reminder of the depth and breadth of God's love for us. We too are reminded to pass this good news on to others, to share with them the never-failing love of God, especially through the sharing of bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ. This is the covenant, the eternal agreement that God has given us, through Jesus.

Make us mindful, O Lord, of the covenant that you made with us through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Every time we eat and drink, Christ is with us through bread and wine. Amen.

Thursday, March 28

Maundy Thursday

John 13:1–17, 31b–35

Passover is usually a time of celebration, with family and friends gathering for a meal to remember the mighty acts of God. But this Passover meal, eaten by Jesus and his disciples, was different. Though the disciples tried to observe the usual ritual, Jesus was distracted and distant; Jesus knew the suffering he was to bear, and the trials and failures his disciples would face. How might he prepare them for what was to come? He gave them an example of servant love, in his washing of their feet and commanding them to love one another. Then he broke bread and shared wine, and told them it was his body and blood, and that they should remember him in repeating this, when they gathered, in memory of him. In good times and bad, we Christians gather as the disciples did, to remember our Lord and his sacrificial love.

*"For you saved me by giving your body and blood. As long as I live, Jesus, make me your servant." Amen.
(from our theme hymn for Lent; ELW 808, Verse 3)*

Friday, March 29

Good Friday

John 18:1–19:42

For most people alive that day, it was an ordinary Friday. They went about their business, taking care of life and families, struggling with the never-ending rounds of daily living. If they knew of the brutal injustice being done outside the city walls of Jerusalem, they could probably only muster a weary resignation—evil was so prevalent in the world, what was one more sad example of it? When the poor sufferer on that cross heaved out a last breath and exclaimed, “It is finished,” no doubt they would have been relieved that the brutality was over. But what was finished with that cry? They did not realize it at the time, but what was finished was that old brutal, sinful, evil world, and the power it holds over us. An ordinary day, but in that death the power that death holds over us was destroyed forever.

God, there are no words adequate to tell of your love on that cross. We can only marvel at such divine love that transforms our lives from darkness into light. Amen.

Saturday, March 30

“Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” (ELW 808, Verse 4)

The day between Good Friday and Easter is a strange, unsettling one. It is a day between, between the traumas of Christ’s death and the glories of his resurrection. But this Saturday is the day we live all our days, living each day in between Good Friday and Easter. We try to live in the hope of Easter, though it is not yet realized, and we are weak. As the hymn puts it:

**I fear in the dark and the doubt of my journey;
but courage will come with the sound of your
steps by my side.**

**And with all of the family you saved by your love,
we’ll sing to your dawn at the end of our journey.**

(ELW Hymn 808, verse 4)

We can live in the sure and certain hope that such a dawn will come, and that our journey ends in Jesus and God’s unfailing love.

God, journey with us. Assure us of your presence and your love. Strengthen our faltering feet, guide us on our way, and welcome us home at the end. Amen.

Sunday, March 31

Easter

Mark 16:1–8

Easter is a glorious day, but one that the world does not understand. The world has sought to try and take over Christmas, and has done much of this—who can resist the baby in the manger, with angels and shepherds and wise men? But the world does not understand resurrection, and does not know what to do with it. The world does not understand that on that day, the power that death holds over us was destroyed forever. The Easter hope, that the power of God is stronger than anything in the world, seems absurd to them. As Paul writes: “The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). We live each day in the hope, the glory of Easter, because to us it is life itself.

Keep us, O God, each day in the power of resurrection, and your victory over the grave. May we each know this hope and this power in our lives each and every day. Amen.

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Contributing Writers

Mark Granquist

Lloyd and Annelotte Svendsbye Professor of the History of Christianity

Rolf Jacobson '91 M.Div.

Alvin N. Rogness Professor of Scripture, Theology, and Ministry

Amy Marga

Professor of Systematic Theology

Emily Rova-Hegener '99 M.Div.

Contextual Learning Associate

Cody Sanders

Associate Professor of Congregational & Community Care Leadership

Steve Thomason '15 Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Spiritual Formation

Jennifer Wojciechowski '19 Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Church History

Theological Editor

James L. Boyce '71 M.Div.

Professor Emeritus of New Testament and Greek

Editorial Coordinator

Bethany Riethmeier

Donor Engagement Manager

Luther Seminary

2481 Como Avenue

St. Paul, MN 55108

651-641-3456

luthersem.edu