

Finding Hope in a House Divided and a World on Fire

A Midweek Prayer Liturgy

based on writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Week 3 - March 26, 2025

Welcome to worship! Lent is a time of the church year when Christians are invited to enter a period of reflection on our faith and how faith can guide our journey through life. As Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, we hear the words of the prophet Joel encouraging us to “Return to God with all our hearts.” These words describe the theme of Lent and invite us to delve deeper into our life of faith.

During our time of worship each Wednesday, we will hear the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer penned during his faithful journey through life and death.

Candles are available to light at any point throughout the service as you feel moved to pray or to remember a loved one. Those who are joining worship from home are also invited to light candles.

**Bold indicates congregational responses.*

Opening Sentences - from Letters and Papers from Prison (528)

By powers of good so wondrously protected,

we wait with confidence, befall what may.

God is with us at night and in the morning

and oh, most certainly on each new day.

Hymn - By Gracious Powers.....ELW 626



1 By gra - cious pow'rs so won - der - ful - ly shel - tered,
2 Yet is this heart by its old foe tor - ment - ed,
3 And when this cup you give is filled to brim - ming
4 Yet when a - gain in this same world you give us
5 By gra - cious pow'rs so faith - ful - ly pro - tect - ed,



and con - fi - dent - ly wait - ing come what may,
still e - vil days bring bur - dens hard to bear;
with bit - ter suf - f'ring, hard to un - der - stand,
the joy we had, the bright - ness of your sun,
so qui - et - ly, so won - der - ful - ly near,



we know that God is with us night and morn - ing,
oh, give our fright - ened souls the sure sal - va - tion,
we take it thank - ful - ly and with - out trem - bling
we shall re - mem - ber all the days we lived through
we live each day in hope, with you be - side us,



and nev - er fails to greet us each new day.
for which, O Lord, you taught us to pre - pare.
out of so good and so be - loved a hand.
and our whole life shall then be yours a - lone.
and go with you through ev - 'ry com - ing year.

Text: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1906–1945; tr. Fred Pratt Green, 1903–2000
Music: TELOS, Robert Buckley Farlee, b. 1950
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Psalmody - from Prayer Book of the Bible (53)

Psalm 103 teaches us to understand the entire fullness of the gifts of God, from the preservation of life to the forgiveness of sins, as a great unity and to come before God thanking and praising [God] for them (cf. also Psalm 65).

Psalm 103:1-5 (*Read responsively.*)

¹Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.

²**Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits —**

³who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

⁴**who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,**

⁵who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Hymn - Come Down, O Love Divine.....ELW 804

1 Come down, O Love di - vine; seek thou this soul of mine
 2 Oh, let it free - ly burn, till world - ly pas - sions turn
 3 Let ho - ly char - i - ty mine out - ward ves - ture be,
 4 And so the year - ning strong, with which the soul will long,

and vis - it it with thine own ar - dor glow - ing;
 to dust and ash - es in its heat con - sum - ing;
 and low - li - ness be - come mine in - ner cloth - ing—
 shall far out - pass the pow'r of hu - man tell - ing;

O Com - fort - er, draw near; with - in my heart ap - pear
 and let thy glo - rious light shine ev - er on my sight,
 true low - li - ness of heart, which takes the hum - bler part,
 no soul can guess Love's grace till it be - come the place

and kin - dle it, thy ho - ly flame be - stow - ing.
 and clothe me round, the while my path il - lum - ing.
 and o'er its own short - com - ings weeps with loath - ing.
 where - in the Ho - ly Spir - it makes a dwell - ing.

Text: Bianco da Siena, d. 1434; tr. Richard F. Littledale, 1833-1890
 Music: DOWN AMPNEY, Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958
 Outside USA: Music from *The English Hymnal*, © Oxford University Press 1906.

Reading - Luke 4:16-21

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Reflection - from Letters and Papers from Prison (381)

"You are being baptized today as a Christian. All those great and ancient words of the Christian proclamation will be pronounced over you, and the command of Jesus Christ to baptize will be carried out, without your understanding any of it. But we too are being thrown back all the way to the beginnings of our understanding. What reconciliation and redemption mean, rebirth and the Holy Spirit, love for one's enemies, cross and resurrection, what it means to live in Christ and follow Christ, all that is so difficult and remote that we hardly dare speak of it anymore. In these words and actions handed down to us, we sense something new and revolutionary, but we cannot yet grasp it and express it. This is our own fault. Our church has been fighting during these years only for its self-preservation, as if that were an end in itself. It has become incapable of bringing the word of reconciliation and redemption to humankind and to the world. So the words we used before must lose their power, be silenced, and we can be Christians today in only two ways, through prayer and doing justice among human beings."

Silence for reflection.

Who Am I? - from Letters and Papers from Prison (448-449)

Who am I? They often tell me,
I come out of my cell
Calm and cheerful and poised
Like a squire from his manor.

Who am I? They often tell me,
I speak with my guards
Freely and friendly and clear,
As though I were the one in charge.

Who am I? They also tell me,
I bear days of calamity
Serenely, smiling and proud,
like one accustomed to victory.

Am I really what others say of me?
Or am I only what I know of myself?

Restless, yearning, sick, like a caged
bird,
struggling for life breath, as if I were
being strangled,
starving for colors, for flowers, for
birdsong,
thirsting for kind words, human
closeness,

shaking with rage power lust and
pettiest insult,
helplessly fearing for friends so far
away,
too tired and empty to pray, to think,
to work,
weary and ready to take my leave of
it all?

Who am I? This one or the other?
Am I this one today and tomorrow
another?
Am I both at once? Before others, a
hypocrite
and in my own eyes a pitiful,
whimpering weakling?
Or is what remains in me like a
defeated army,
Fleeing in disarray from victory
already won?

Who am I? They mock me, these
lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, thou knowest me; O
God, I am thine!

Prayers - adapted from Letters and Papers from Prison (174-175)

God, be gracious and help us.
Give us strength to bear the pains of the world.
Do not let fear rule over us.
Give tender care to those we love,
Protect them from all evil and all danger.

Merciful God,
Forgive us everything in which we have sinned
Against you and others.
We trust in your grace
And commit our lives entirely into your hand.
We are with you, and you are with us, o God
We await your salvation and your kingdom.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing - from Letters and Papers from Prison (495)

Not always doing and daring what's random, but seeking the right thing,
Hover not over the possible, but boldly reach for the real.
Not escaping to thought, in action alone is found freedom.
Dare to quit anxious faltering and enter the storm of events,
carried alone by your faith and by God's good commandments,
then true freedom will come and embrace your spirit, rejoicing.
Amen.

Dismissal

Who is Christ for us, today?
The outcasts, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed and reviled, the suffering.
Go in peace to be with them.
Thanks be to God.

SERVING TODAY

Director of Music Ministries/Organist:Alan L. Hair
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Referenced Works:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Works - Reader's Edition, Fortress Press, 2015
Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible, Broadleaf Books,
2022 Scripture references are from the NRSVue.