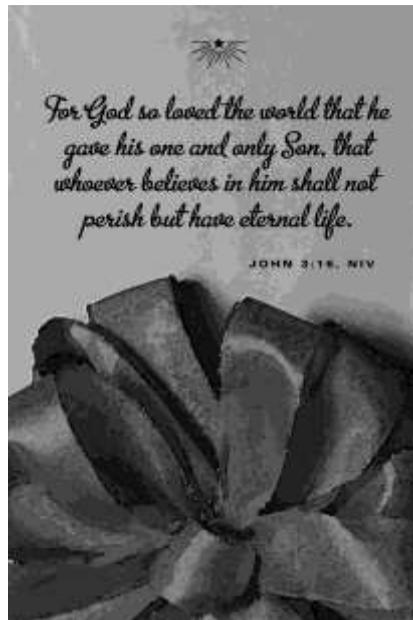


THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

December 31, 2017

Worship Focus
Life at the Crossroads



CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH
9807 CHURCH ROAD
DALLAS, TX 75238 + 214-348-5567
churchsec@caltex.org

THE ORDER OF SERVICE

Morning Praise

Christian Worship Page 45

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OPENING HYMN

72 – O Lord, Our Father, Thanks and Praise



1 O Lord, our Fa - ther, thanks and praise In this new
2 Lord Je - sus Christ, our thanks and praise In this new
3 O Ho - ly Spir - it, thanks and praise In this new
4 Our faith - ful God, we cry to you: Still bless us



year we ren - der, For ev - 'ry e - vil had to
year we ren - der; Your reign has kept your peo - ple
year we ren - der, For you have led our eyes to
with your fa - vor, Blot out all our in - iq - ui -



flee Be - fore you, our de - fend - er. Our
free, Has shown your mer - cies ten - der. You
see Your truth in all its splen - dor And
ty, And hide our sins for - ev - er. Grant



life was nour - ished, we were fed With rich sup - plies
have re - deemed us with your blood; You are our joy,
thus en - kin - dled from a - bove With - in our hearts
us a hap - py, good new year And, when the hour



of dai - ly bread, And peace reigned in our bor - ders,
our on - ly good, In life and death our Sav - ior.
true faith and love And oth - er Chris - tian vir - tues,
of death draws near, A peace - ful, blest de - par - ture.

Text: Cyriacus Schneegass, 1546–97; tr. August Crull, 1845–1923, alt.
Tune: NUN FREUT EUCH, LIEBEN CHRISTEN (87 87 887) *Erlich Cristlich liden*, Wittenberg, 1524.

INVOCATION AND PRAYER



M: O Lord, o - pen my lips.



C: And my mouth shall de - clare your praise.



M: Has - ten to save me, O God.



C: O Lord, come quick - ly to help me.



M: Christmas) Unto us the _____ Christ is born: let us wor - ship him.

JESUS
CHRIST
Is Born



PRAAYER AND PRAISE

C: Oh, come, let us sing to the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our sal - va - tion. Let us come into his presence with thanks-giv - ing, let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise. For the Lord is a great God and a great king a-bove all gods. The deep places of the earth are in his hand; the heights of the hills are al - so his. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hand formed the dry land. Oh, come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our mak - er. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

The musical score is written on ten staves in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (D major). It features a melody with various note values including quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests. The lyrics are placed below the corresponding musical phrases.

THE WORD

FIRST LESSON Ezra 9:5-9, 13-15

As Ezra looks back at the crossroads of Israel's history, he clearly sees both the sin of the people and the grace of God.

^{EZRA 9:5} Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my self-abasement, with my tunic and cloak torn, and fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the LORD my God⁶ and prayed:

“O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens.⁷ From the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great. Because of our sins, we and our kings and our priests have been subjected to the sword and captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today.

⁸“But now, for a brief moment, the LORD our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage.⁹ Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.

¹³ “What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this.¹⁴ Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor?¹⁵ O LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence.”



PSALM

Psalm 90

Refrain Tune: Eugene Englert. © 1986 GIA Publications, Inc., Chicago, IL,
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Lord, you have been our | dwelling place*
throughout all gener | ations.

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth | and the
world,*
from everlasting to everlasting | you are God.

For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has | just gone by,*
or like a watch | in the night. *Refrain*

You have set our iniquities be | fore you,*
our secret sins in the light of your | presence.

You turn mortals | back to dust.*
You sweep them away in the | sleep of death.

The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we | have the strength;*
yet their span is but trouble and | sorrow.

Teach us to number our | days aright,*
that we may gain a heart of | wisdom. *Refrain*

Satisfy us in the morning with your un | failing love,*
that we may sing for joy and be glad | all our days.

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit,
as it was in the be | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen. *Refrain*

SECOND LESSON Romans 8:31-39

At whatever precipice in life you are standing, Paul assures us that, in Christ, we are more than conquerors.

ROMANS 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.



*We are more than conquerors
through him who loved us.
Romans 8:37*

GOSPEL Matthew 16:24-28

Because we know that Jesus will eventually return – the ultimate crossroad between time and eternity – each day is an opportunity to follow Jesus.

MATTHEW 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

HYMN OF THE DAY

452 – Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus



1 Let us ev - er walk with Je - sus, Fol - low his ex -
2 Let us suf - fer here with Je - sus, To his im - age
3 Let us al - so die with Je - sus, His death from the
4 Let us glad - ly live with Je - sus; Since he's ris - en



am - ple pure, Flee the world which would de - ceive us
e'er con - form; Heav - en's glo - ry soon will please us,
sec - ond death, From our soul's de - struc - tion, frees us,
from the dead, Death and grave must soon re - lease us.



And to sin our souls al - lure, Ev - er in his
Sun - shine fol - low on the storm, Though we sow in
Quick - ens us with life's glad breath, Let us mor - ti -
Je - sus, thou art now our head, We are tru - ly



foot - steps tread - ing, Bod - y here, yet soul a - bove,
tears of sor - row, We shall reap in heav'n - ly joy,
fy, while liv - ing, Flesh and blood and die to sin,
thine own mem - bers; Where thou liv - est, there live we.



Full of faith and hope and love, Let us do the
And the fears that now an - noy Shall be laugh - ter
And the grave that shuts us in Shall but prove the
Take and own us con - stant - ly, Faith - ful Friend, as



Fa - ther's bid - ding. Faith - ful Lord, a - bide with me.
on the mor - row. Christ, I suf - fer here with thee;
gate to heav - en. Je - sus, here I die to thee,
thy dear breth - ren. Je - sus, here I live to thee,



Sav - ior, lead; I fol - low thee.
There, oh, share thy joy with me.
There to live e - ter - nal - ly.
Al - so there e - ter - nal - ly.

Text: Sigmund von Birken, 1626–81; tr. J. Adam Rimbach, 1871–1941, alt.

Tune: LASSET UNS MIT JESU ZIEHEN (87 87 877 877) Georg G. Boltze, 18th century, alt.

SERMON

Ezra 9:13

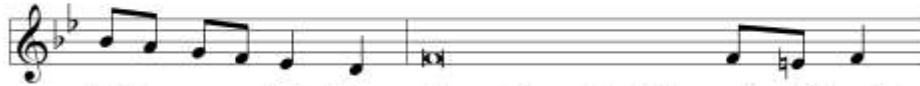
Mark this Milestone with Something Memorable

PRAISE AND PRAYER

RESPONSE TO THE WORD



C: We praise you, O God, we acclaim you as Lord; all creation worships you,



Fa-ther ev - er - last - ing. To you all angels, all the pow'rs of heav'n,



cherubim and seraphim, sing in end-less praise: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of



heav'n - ly hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glo - ry.



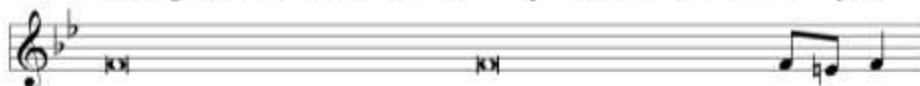
The glorious company of apostles praise you. The noble fellowship of



proph - ets praise you. The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.



Throughout the world the ho - ly Church ac - claims you:



Father of majesty unbounded, your glorious, true, and on - ly Son,



and the Holy Spirit, ad - vo - cate and guide. You, Christ, are the King of



glo - ry, the eternal Son of the Fa - ther. When you became man to



set us free, you humbled yourself to be born of a vir - gin. You overcame the



sting of death and opened the kingdom of heaven to all be - liev - ers.



You sit at the right hand of God in the glory of the Fa - ther.



We believe that you will come to be our judge.



Come then, Lord, and help your peo - ple, bought with the price of



your own blood, and bring us with your saints to glory ev - er - last - ing.

FRIENDSHIP REGISTER and GATHERING OF OFFERINGS

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Brief silence

For the year that is almost over, in thanksgiving to God for all the good we were permitted to give and receive, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the year that is almost here, that God would continue to watch over us and bless us, and that He would give us opportunity to serve our neighbor and tell others the good news of His Son, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For patience and vigilance as we await the return of Christ, that God would keep us ever faithful and ready with our lamps burning, always awake and ready, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our government, military, first responders and all who serve us in the civil realm, that they would use the authority and responsibility given to them to serve God's will, protect the innocent, administer justice and provide for the needy, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who do not confess the faith, that God would give them opportunity to hear the Gospel and believe, and that we would always be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within us, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who are sick, lonely, homebound and in mourning, that God would grant them healing, companionship, comfort and the sure and certain knowledge that nothing can separate them from His love in Christ Jesus, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, we are bold to ask You, Lord, because You have made us Your people and members of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

C Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

SERMON HYMN

379 – Amazing Grace

1 A - maz - ing grace— how sweet the sound—
 2 The Lord has prom - ised good to me;
 3 Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares
 4 When we've been there ten thou - sand years,

That saved a wretch like me! I
 His Word my hope se - cures, He
 I have al - read - y come; 'Tis
 Bright shin - ing as the sun, We've

once was lost but now am found,
 will my shield and por - tion be
 grace has brought me safe thus far,
 no less days to sing God's praise

Was blind but now I see.
 As long as life en - dures.
 And grace will lead me home.
 Than when we'd first be - gun.

Text: John Newton, 1725–1807, st. 1-3, abr.; John P. Rees, 19th century, st. 4.
 Tune: NEW BRITAIN (CM) *Columbian Harmony*, Cincinnati, 1829, alt.

PRAYER AND BLESSING

M O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

C Amen.



M: Let us praise the Lord.



C: Thanks be to God.



M: The grace of our Lord + Je - sus Christ and the love of God



and the fellowship of the Holy Spir - it be with you all.



C: A - men.



CLOSING HYMN

473 – Savior, I Follow On



1 Sav - ior, I fol - low on, Guid - ed by thee,
 2 Riv - en the rock for me, Thirst to re - lieve,
 3 Of - ten to Ma - rah's brink Have I been brought;
 4 Sav - ior, I long to walk Clos - er with thee;



See - ing not yet the hand That lead - eth me,
 Man - na from heav - en falls Fresh ev - 'ry eve.
 Shrink - ing the cup to drink, Help I have sought,
 Led by thy guid - ing hand, Ev - er to be



Hushed be my heart and still; Fear I no fur - ther ill.
 Nev - er a want se - vere Caus - eth my eye a tear,
 And with the prayer's as - cent Je - sus the branch hath rent,
 Con - stant - ly near thy side, Quick - ened and pu - ri - fied,

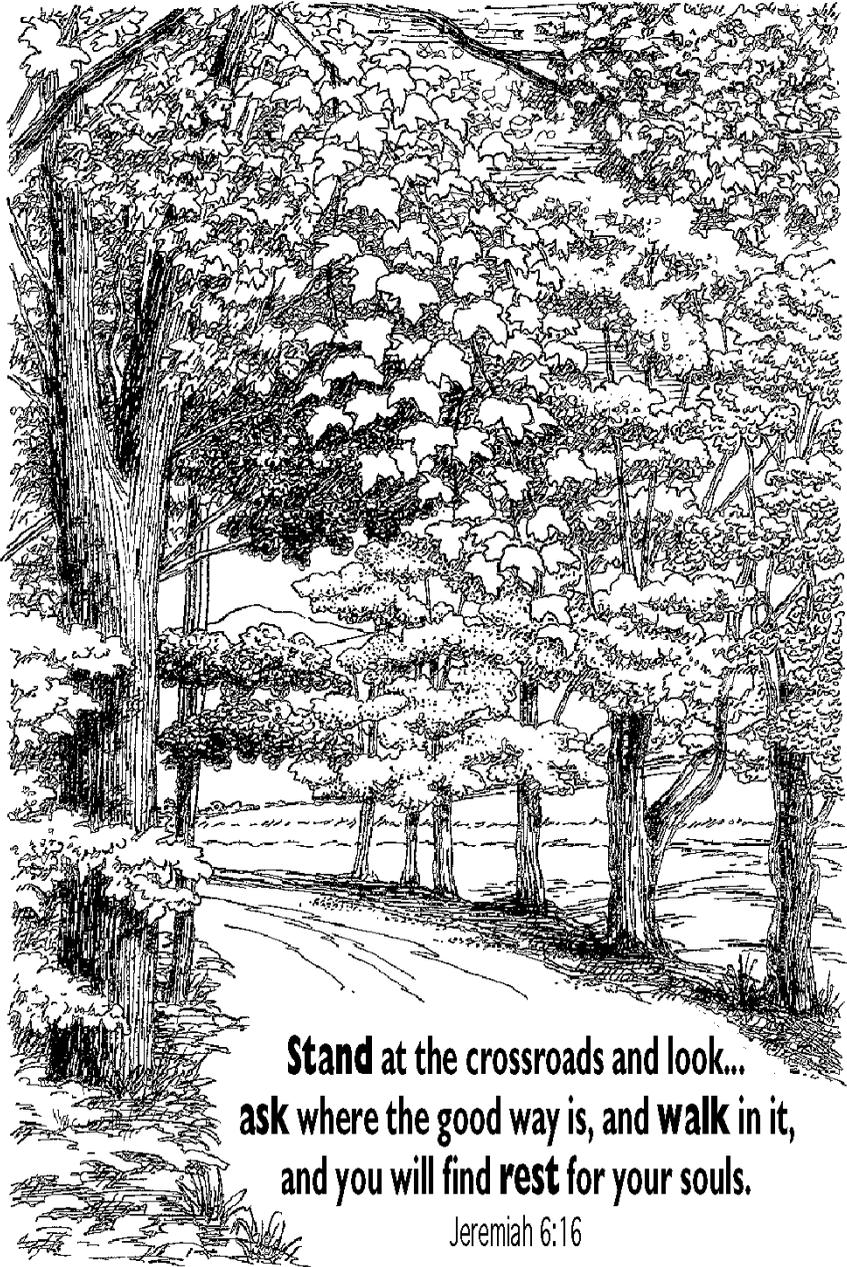


On - ly to meet thy will My will shall be,
 But thou dost whis - per near, "On - ly be - lieve."
 Quick - ly re - lief hath sent, Sweet - 'ning the draught.
 Liv - ing for him who died Free - ly for me.

Text: Charles S. Robinson, 1829-99, alt.

Tune: WINTERTON (64 64 6664) Joseph Barnby, 1838-96.

After worship, please feel free to stay and greet your neighbors.



Stand at the crossroads and look...
ask where the good way is, and **walk** in it,
and you will find **rest** for your souls.

Jeremiah 6:16