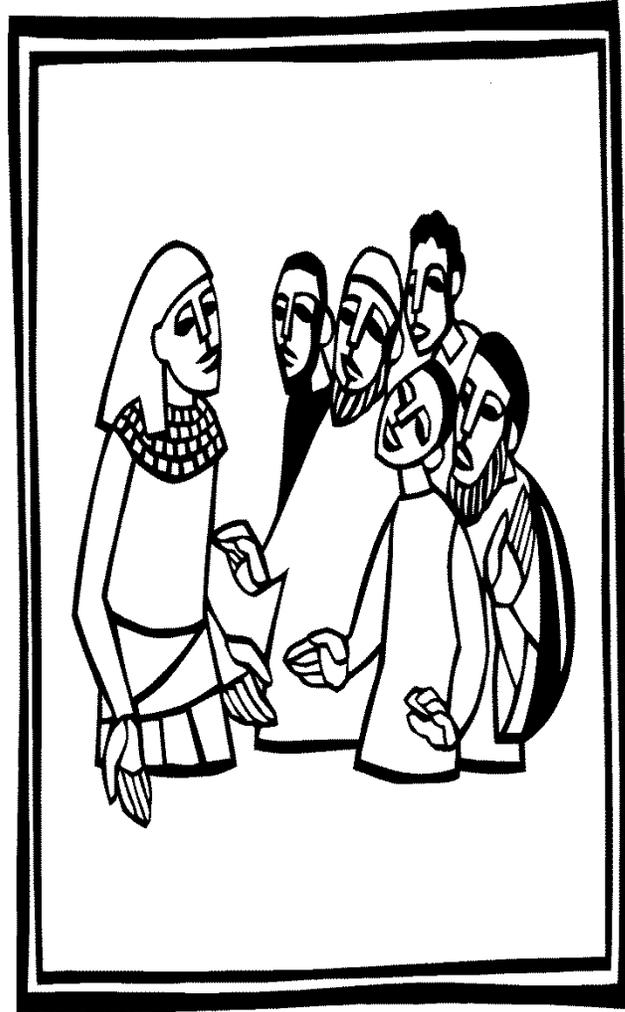


*Messiah Lutheran Church
Mechanicsville, Virginia*



*February 20, 2022
The Seventh Sunday after Epiphany*

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*To share the Good News of Jesus Christ
and to invite all to join us in faith, worship, and service.*

The service will be livestreamed at 10:45 am on Messiah's FB page, and that video will be available later on the church website and YouTube. There is no pre-recording of the service on YouTube this week.

Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/MessiahMech/>

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

8154 Atlee Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111

Pastor: The Rev. Ryan Radtke

Church: (804) 746-7134; Email: MessiahMech@gmail.com; Website: MessiahMech.com

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

FEBRUARY 20, 2022

**Congregation standing*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome visitors! May the Spirit of Christ fill your heart as we worship today. You are invited to make Messiah your church home.

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who creates us, redeems us, and calls us by name.

C: Amen

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

P: Most merciful God,

C: *we confess that we have sinned against you and your beloved children. We have turned our faces away from your glory when it did not appear as we expected. We have rejected your word when it made us confront ourselves. We have failed to show hospitality to those you called us to welcome. Accept our repentance for the things we have done and the things we have left undone. For the sake of Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us and lead us, that we may bathe in the glory of your Son born among us, and reflect your love for all creation. Amen.*

P: Rejoice in this good news: In ☩ Christ Jesus, your sins are forgiven. You are descendants of the Most High, adopted into the household of Christ, and inheritors of eternal life. Live as freed and forgiven children of God.

C: Amen.

*** GATHERING SONG *All Creatures, Worship God Most High!* (ELW 835) vs 1-4**

All Creatures, Worship God Most High!



1 All crea-tures, wor-ship God most high! Sound ev - 'ry voice in earth and
2 Sing, broth - er wind; with clouds and rain you grow the gifts of fruit and
3 Sing, broth - er fire, so mirth - ful, strong; drive far the shad - ows, join the
4 All who for love of God for - give, all who in pain or sor - row



sky: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Sing, broth - er sun, in splen - dor
grain: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Dear sis - ter wa - ter, use - ful,
throng: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Dear moth - er earth, so rich in
grieve: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Christ bears your bur - dens and your



bright; sing, sis - ter moon and stars of night:
clear, make mu - sic for your Lord to hear: Al - le - lu - ia, al - le -
care, praise God in col - ors bright and rare:
fears; still make your song a - mid the tears:



lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

*THE GREETING

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: ***And also with you.***

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray together:

C: ***O Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace, that where there is hatred, we may sow love, where there is injury, pardon, and where there is despair, hope. Grant, O divine master, that we may seek to console, to understand, and to love in your name, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen***

FIRST READING: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Lector

A reading from Genesis.

Many years after being sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph reveals himself to them. Now the second-in-command in Egypt, Joseph reassures his brothers that God has used their evil intentions for good to preserve life during a devastating famine, and Joseph forgives them.

³Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.' " ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Lector

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

In the Apostles' Creed, we speak of the "resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Using the metaphor of a planted seed and the story of Adam, Paul preaches passionately about the mystery of following Christ's perfect life into eternity.

³⁵But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

⁴²So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is

raised is imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

⁵⁰What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

***GOSPEL: Luke 6: 27-38**

P: The Holy Gospel according to Luke.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus continues to address a crowd of his disciples. He invites his followers to shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity, and trust even on enemies and outsiders. Living in harmony with God's intent brings the reward of overflowing blessing.

[Jesus said:] ²⁷"But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³²"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over,

will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

Pastor Ryan Radtke

Fun fact: it is impossible to lick your own elbow. You may be thinking to yourself: that can't be true. You might want to try to lick your own elbow right now. But trust me – it's not going to happen. Oh, and you might think there's a clever workaround. Nope. We tried this with our kids a while back, and they thought they had it beat: you lick your finger and then touch that finger to your elbow – yeah, no. That doesn't count. There's no loophole. It's impossible to lick your own elbow. Period.

When Jesus says, “Love your enemies,” he might as well be saying, “Lick your own elbow.” “Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you...” I'm all for the golden rule. Do to others as you would have them do unto you. Of course. But that doesn't mean that people have no consequences for their actions. If someone hates me, curses me, abuses me...well, then the thought of turning the other cheek to invite more abuse, and cursing, and hatred, seems about as emotionally impossible as licking my own elbow is physically impossible

Forgive my enemies? Really, Jesus?

Now, Jesus does put forth a good argument. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.” Jesus says, do good to everybody, expecting nothing in return. On paper that all seems really admirable. That seems like a way of life worth living. Very “golden rule.” So maybe I should take a step back – is it impossible to love my enemies?

I suppose it might depend on what kind of enemies we're talking about. Maybe we're talking *minor* enemies. You know, that one clerk in the store who's always rude to you. Maybe we're talking rival teams and their fans. Who else can't stand the Cowboys, am I right? Maybe we're talking about your neighbor who always tries to one-up you with their Christmas lights. Maybe we're talking about that one kid in middle school who was always kind of a jerk.

If *these* are the enemies Jesus is talking about, then, well, maybe I could find a way to treat them with love.

But what if we're talking about the kind of enemies who *really* hurt us? The ones who break trust. The ones who make us feel used. The ones who make us feel worthless. The ones who actually do abuse us, who cut us to the core? The ones who go out of their way to do unto us what they would never, ever, want anyone do unto them. The bullies, the saboteurs, the character assassins, the gaslighters, the toxic. What about those enemies?

I've been hurt by those kinds of enemies before, down to the bone. And I've seen and heard the stories of others who have been deeply hurt, too – colleagues. Loved ones. More times than I'd like to count, I have seen good people get personally attacked. Professionally attacked. Laid low and made to feel less than. I know that for many, society itself has declared itself their enemy – no escaping that. I've seen enemies who inflicted hurts that linger. Hurts that scar. Hurts that make you doubt yourself, even hate yourself. How can anyone possibly love *those* enemies? How could anyone bless *those* curse-inflictors? What prayer does a person say for an abuser, except to pray to God that they would stop? Or face consequences.

There is an expression that goes something like: holding a grudge, or holding on to anger, is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. So, I can take that expression to heart. It doesn't do any good to hold onto anger against the people that have hurt me. It doesn't bring me healing to hold a grudge against my enemy. I can pray for God to help me let go, to shape me into a posture of something like reconciliation. But to take it that next step, to *love* them...Well, that feels like trying to lick my own elbow. And, since licking one's own elbow is physically impossible, the only way to do it is to dislocate something. To love *those* kinds of enemies feels like just hurting myself even more.

Where is the grace in all of this? I'm glad that God loves me even when I mess up, when I act like God's enemy; but where is the grace in our Lord and Savior expecting us to love our enemies, to invite more hurt? Do our enemies care if we love them? Where is the good news in all of this, when this is impossible? Where is the light of Epiphany shining through?

Let me just take a step back and really show you just how silly and absurd this is. It is physically impossible to lick your own elbow. I think we've established that pretty well. There is no grace in Jesus commanding us to lick our own elbows. If God really wants elbows to get licked, then I guess that means you'll need to ask for help: you'll just have to have your neighbor lick your elbow, and

you can lick theirs. ... Just kidding! You were actually thinking about trying it, weren't you?!

It is physically impossible to lick your own elbow. It is an undeniable fact that you cannot do it. Loving your enemies, on the level that Jesus is talking about, is also impossible – on our own. But with God, all things are possible. God knows that our hearts, our souls, will be made lighter and will find healing if we are able to love and forgive our enemies, those that hurt us, just like God forgives us. God knows that our hearts, our souls, will be made lighter and will find healing when we turn to God, pray to God, and say, “God – I can't do this. Not on my own. I cannot love my enemies. I need your help.”

We heard today in the book of Genesis about Joseph forgiving his brothers. His brothers knocked him into a pit and sold him into slavery! They shipped him off to Egypt and lied to their father Jacob, saying that Joseph had been killed. Years, decades pass. Joseph ends up in jail not once, but twice, and both times he did nothing wrong. But God was with Joseph and worked good out of all that evil, all of that hurt. God brought about relief from famine for Egypt and beyond, and brought Joseph and his brothers back together. Joseph forgave his brothers, loved his former enemies, and they were able to reconcile. This was only possible with God.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians we heard about the difference between Adam, the man of dust, and Jesus, the man of heaven. Human beings, on our own, are children of dust, as we'll hear very soon on Ash Wednesday: remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. In this case human beings were God's enemies, stained with sin. On our own, we'd never fix that. But with God all things are possible; through Jesus, God-in-the-flesh, we are loved, redeemed, saved, forgiven, and no longer enemies.

As Jesus is on the cross – *while he is being crucified* – he prays that God would forgive those who mocked him and arrested him and falsely accused him and crucified him, saying “They know not what they do.” As his enemies are literally killing him, Jesus loves them enough to pray for their forgiveness.

Let me make sure I say again – loving your enemies does not mean that there are no consequences for their actions. People who hurt you still need to be held accountable. And I will be bluntly honest – I still struggle in terms of letting go of the hurts and anger towards those that have hurt me, hurt those that I love, hurt others that I know did nothing wrong. But on a different level, God knows that our hearts, our souls, will be made lighter and will find healing if we are able to love our enemies, those that hurt us, just like God loves us. It might actually require some dislocation – changing our location from hatred to

a location of Christlike love. And that will undoubtedly be painful, that dislocation to love enemies. But we are blessed with a savior who heals.

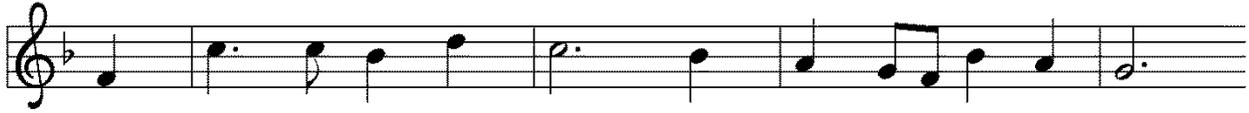
Right now we are living in a world that is increasingly teaching us, demanding us, to see more and more people as enemies. Us versus them. No middle ground. No putting yourself in others' shoes. No empathy. Just sides and rivals. Enemies at the drop of a hat, at the posting of a comment, at the stating of an opinion. We are called to be countercultural right now, and resist the calls for wearing enemy-tinted lenses. Seem impossible? Jesus' cross-shaped love eclipses enemies, transcends our limitations, and makes the impossible, possible.

It is physically impossible to lick your own elbow. And it is likewise impossible to love our enemies the way Jesus loves his enemies; it is impossible *on our own*. The good news, the grace, the light, in all of this, is that with God all things are possible. I struggle mightily with how to love my enemies. I wish I had a step-by-step guide for us all; but it's complicated, and contextual, and messy, and challenging, and even dislocatingly painful sometimes. But I can tell you that God is for us, and God loves us, and God will help us, even when we were, or are, enemies of God and God's desired kingdom. As it says in one of the prayers of confession and forgiveness in the hymnal, "God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved."

By grace may our salvation extend to how we see others, who we call enemy, and how we love. Amen.

* HYMN OF THE DAY *Oh, Praise the Gracious Power* (ELW 651)

Oh, Praise the Gracious Power

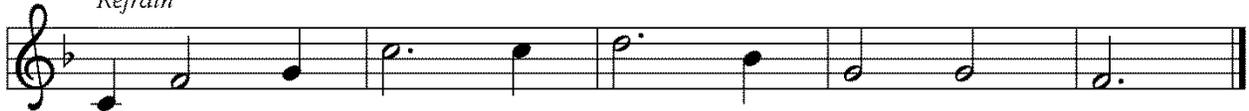


- 1 Oh, praise the gra - cious pow'r that tum - bles walls of fear
- 2 Oh, praise per - sis - tent truth that o - pens fist - ed minds
- 3 Oh, praise in - clu - sive love, en - cir - cling ev - 'ry race,
- 4 Oh, praise the word of faith that claims us as God's own,
- 5 Oh, praise the tide of grace that laps at ev - 'ry shore



and gath - ers in one house of faith all strang - ers far and near:
and eas - es from their anx - ious clutch the prej - u - dice that blinds:
ob - liv - i - ous to gen - der, wealth, to so - cial rank or place:
a liv - ing tem - ple built on Christ, our rock and cor - ner - stone:
with vi - sions of a world at peace, no lon - ger bled by war:

Refrain



We praise you, Christ! Your cross has made us one!

- 6 Oh, praise the pow'r, the truth,
the love, the word, the tide.
Yet more than these, oh, praise their source,
praise Christ the crucified: *Refrain*
- 7 Oh, praise the living Christ
with faith's bright songful voice!
Announce the gospel to the world
and with these words rejoice: *Refrain*

Text: Thomas H. Troeger, b. 1945
Music: CHRISTPRAISE RAY, Carol Doran, b. 1936
Text and music from *New Hymns for the Lectionary*, © 1984 Oxford University Press, Inc.

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CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,

**he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

***PRAYERS**

A: The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made. *[Brief silence]*

A: You teach us to love our neighbors and enemies alike. Encourage your church to follow the leading of your love, especially when it is risky or difficult. Help us to show mercy just as we have first received mercy. God of grace,

C: *hear our prayer.*

A: Nurture fields that lie dormant, resting until it is time to bloom again. Bless farmers and all who cultivate fields and urban gardens. Give favorable weather for planting. Bring forth from buried seed an abundant harvest, and guard against famine and disease. God of grace,

C: *hear our prayer.*

A: Look upon our world with mercy, that we delight in an abundance of peace. Protect all whose lives are marred by war and civil unrest. Release political prisoners and amplify the voices that challenge us to seek forgiveness and pursue nonviolence. God of grace,

C: *hear our prayer.*

A: Your people cry out for mercy. Console hearts that long for forgiveness. Mend broken relationships. Heal bodies that suffer chronic pain or illness. Strengthen and deliver all whose spirits are troubled (*especially*). God of grace,

C: *hear our prayer.*

A: You bind us together into one family. Teach us to forgive one another and to resolve conflicts with humility and patience. Bless families of all shapes and sizes, and show love to those who are lonely or grieving. God of grace,

C: *hear our prayer.*

A: We praise you for the saints who have inherited the fullness of your kingdom.

As you have raised them to imperishable and eternal life, sustain us in faith by the promise of resurrection. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

A: Heavenly Father, You have generously blessed us with families. Thank you for your guidance and protection. As you love and care for us, may we also always love and care for our families and keep them in our prayers. We pray this week for the Porter & Radtke families as well as our Messiah family. May You keep us all from danger and sickness and guard our hearts so that we are reminded of Your Grace. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

C: Amen.

PEACE-IN-PLACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

***Please share signs of peace with those in your immediate vicinity only. If any are not comfortable making physical contact during the peace, please share peace in other ways.*

THE GIVING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

***Offering baskets are located near the doors to the sanctuary. Please place your offerings in the baskets at the end of the service as you depart.*

OFFERTORY PRAYER

A: Let us pray.

C: Blessed are you, O God, Sovereign of the universe. You offer us new beginnings and guide us on our journey. Lead us to your table, nourish us with this heavenly food, and prepare us to carry your love to a hungry world, in the name of Christ our light. Amen

***GREAT THANKSGIVING**

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: *It is right to give God thanks and praise.*

***PREFACE**

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

C: *Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of pow'r and might,*

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

***THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

P: Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever.

C: *Amen.*

***LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

C: *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.***

***INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: Taste and see that the Lord is good.

C: ***Thanks be to God.***

***Please process up the center aisle as directed by the ushers. Please maintain social distancing between family groups while processing. Bread and wine will be available from the pastor and the first lay assistant, with empty cups available on your way to the front. Prepackaged grape juice and wafer servings will be available from the second lay assistant. Baskets for empty cups will be set out. Please return to your seats down the side aisles.*

***POST-COMMUNION BLESSING**

P: May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that you have received strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: ***Amen***

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

A: Let us pray.

We give you thanks, gracious God, for we have feasted on the abundance of your house. Send us to bring good news and to proclaim your favor to all, strengthened with the richness of your grace in your Son, Jesus Christ.

C: ***Amen***

***BLESSING**

P: God, who leads you in pathways of righteousness, who rejoices over you, and who calls you by name, ☩ bless your going out and your coming in, today and forever.

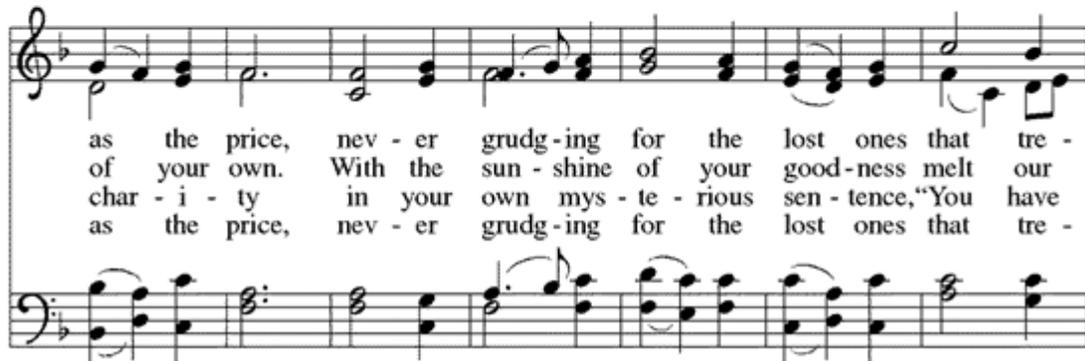
C: ***Amen***

SENDING SONG *Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (ELW 707)*

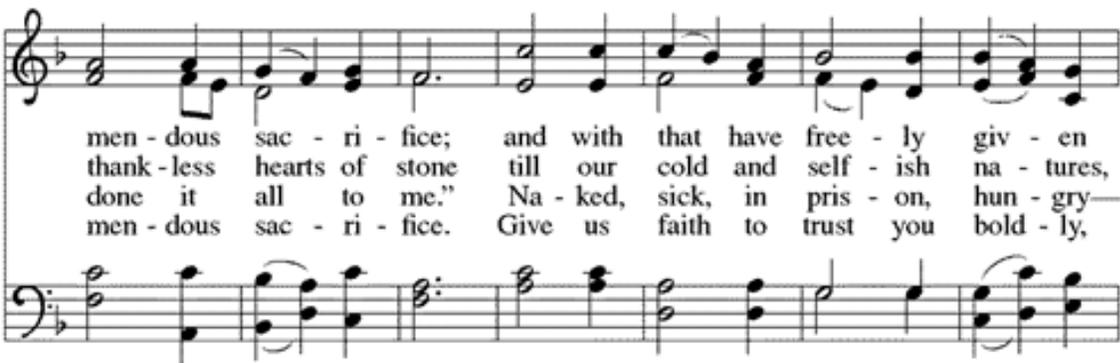
Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us



1 Lord of glo - ry, you have bought us with your life - blood
2 Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give you glad - ly, free - ly,
3 Won-drous hon - or you have giv - en to our hum - blest
4 Lord of glo - ry, you have bought us with your life - blood



as the price, nev - er grudg - ing for the lost ones that tre -
of your own. With the sun - shine of your good - ness melt our
char - i - ty in your own mys - te - rious sen - tence, "You have
as the price, nev - er grudg - ing for the lost ones that tre -



men - dous sac - ri - fice; and with that have free - ly giv - en
thank - less hearts of stone till our cold and self - ish na - tures,
done it all to me." Na - ked, sick, in pris - on, hun - gry—
men - dous sac - ri - fice. Give us faith to trust you bold - ly,



bles - sings count - less as the sand to the un - thank - ful
warmed by you, at length be - lieve that more hap - py
in the least, your face we view, say - ing by your
hope, to stay our souls on you: but, oh, best of



and the e - vil with your own un - spar - ing hand.
and more bless - ed 'tis to give than to re - ceive.
poor and need - y, "Give as I have giv'n to you."
all your grac - es, with your love our love re - new.

***DISMISSAL**

A: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

***Please exit through either set of doors, maintaining distance between family groups. You are welcome to enjoy fellowship time outside in the parking lot.*

POSTLUDE (Text used by permission of Augsburg Fortress license #11886-S)

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS – SUNDAY, February 20, 2022

- Pianist: Debbie Walker
- Lay Assistants: (1st Lay Asst.) Karen Morris (2nd Lay Asst.) Donna Combs
- Lectors: Donna Combs
- Acolyte: Grace Anderson
- Greeters: Sue Gilnett
- Ushers: Roger Schroeder & James Anderson
- Altar Guild: Gladys Hubert & Rosalee Cline
- Counters: Marilyn & Gordon Gunn

Announcements

PASTOR RYAN'S OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Ryan will be mostly virtual one more week. Please call or email him to set up an appointment, at 507-360-7276 and/or messiahmechpr@gmail.com.

WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

Here is this week's information based on our 2022 budget.

- Contributions to the general fund averaged \$2,802.80 (down from \$2,993.11 through February 13, 2022).
- We are \$8,884.37 behind the year-to-date budget needs. (increasing from \$6,473.37)
- Weekly budget need is \$4,072.

YEAR-END FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Please remember to pick up your year-end financial statements on the table in the narthex.

COVID PROTOCOLS UPDATE FROM COUNCIL

The Church Council met this past week and discussed our current COVID response plan. We had initially set the goal to return to the sanctuary when the Hanover positivity rates reached the 10-15% range, based on guidance from the VDH, CDC, Virginia Synod, and resources shared by other local ELCA pastors. We are thankful

that worship and other groups are back in the building once more! For now we ask everyone to continue to wear face coverings and maintain social distancing in the building while the omicron wave continues to diminish. Once positivity rates get below 10% for Hanover, council will reconvene to discuss easing protocols from requiring face coverings to encouraging them, and moving back towards incorporating more aspects of our congregational life together, like the choir, more fellowship, Communion at the rail, fuller liturgy, more outreach activities, and more. Rates are heading in the right direction, and we are hopeful that it won't be much longer. Thank you for your continued prayers, support, and patience.

LENTEN ACTIVITIES:

Ash Wednesday Service

We will begin the season of Lent with a service on Ash Wednesday, March 2nd at 7:00 pm. During the service you will be invited to partake in Lenten disciplines, and an imposition of ashes will be offered.

Lenten Devotions

A new Lenten Devotion called *Grace Unbounded* will be available to take home for a daily reading from the Gospel of Luke, as well as evocative images and brief reflections.

No Wednesday Suppers Or Services

Although we are moving back in the direction of full congregational activities again, we aren't quite back to indoor meals. Therefore we won't be having our Wednesday night soup suppers and services again this year. Stay tuned, though – we are hopeful for something on Easter. And, in the meantime...

Ecumenical Lenten Videos

Once again our group of local pastors from congregations (mostly) on Atlee Road will produce weekly Lenten videos. The theme this year will center on joy and abundance in the season of Lent, where we usually talk about giving things up. Stay tuned for more information and weekly links to the videos.

God's Global Barnyard Drive

We will once again be collecting your coins and more to purchase animals and other items from the ELCA Good Gifts Catalog. Look for the piggy bank to come during Lent. The funds we raise will go towards a shopping spree for our Sunday school students to select small gifts with big impacts for people in many corners of our world. Thanks in advance for your support and generosity!

Lenten Study

Please join us during Sunday adult Christian Formation time in the Fellowship Hall for a new series: "Wrestle with the Bible: Meeting God in difficult stories from Genesis." We'll cover a number of stories that are tough to talk about, and use our scriptural stretching as a practice for deeper Lenten devotion. Each conversation will be recorded and shared for those who would like to follow along from home.

MESSIAH RECEIVES .5% DONATION WHEN YOU SHOP ON AMAZON!

The Stewardship team would like to remind everyone to sign up and use Amazon Smile! Signing up is easy and does not interfere with Prime Membership benefits. Amazon donates .5% of eligible purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. Step 1: visit smile.amazon.com; Step 2: sign in with your amazon account credentials; Step 3: Search for "Messiah Lutheran Church Mechanicsville"; Step 4: Start SHOPPING! *please remember to bookmark smile.amazon.com for easy access every time you shop. You must add the "smile" for this program. Thank you all and happy shopping!

LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

Please visit the Lutheran Disaster Response website to see how you can contribute to the ongoing aid and recovery efforts for the wildfires, tornadoes, and more, both in the U.S. and around the globe.