

* = Please stand as you are comfortable.

Bold type indicates congregational responses.

- **Welcome! No matter your background, circumstance, or footing in faith your presence is valued and celebrated as a part of the beloved community of God today.**
- *Your generosity is appreciated and encouraged as it sustains and furthers the work of the congregation in the community and makes a difference in the lives of many. Gifts and offerings may be placed in the plate at the entrance before, during, or after the service. To give electronically, please visit richfield-lutheran.org/give*

As we Gather...

We continue following the story of Jesus in the Gospel of John, as Nicodemus, a curious Jewish religious leader, approaches Jesus at night to ask questions. Jesus' words articulate double meanings which initially confuse the Pharisee. Within Jesus' speech, however, is the "gospel in a nutshell" – that God so loves this world, God has sent Jesus as a grounding relationship of eternal saving grace. How does this work on us in daily life? We gather to ponder and receive anew, again, from above.

I. GATHERING

PRELUDE

(The prelude gathers us in the Lord's presence. You are invited to center through it.)

CALL TO WORSHIP

The glory of God has now appeared

The mystery of God has been revealed

Let us go and see this thing that has happened

Let us seek the Lord while he may be found

Led by God's light, we bear gifts of joy

Called by God's word, we are welcomed in peace

WELCOME

***CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

(All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, minister begins.)

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose home is in heaven and earth, whose salvation is sure. **Amen.**

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

(Silence is kept for reflection.)

Long-expected God,

we confess that we often look to ourselves for the peace and security only you can provide. We tend to judge our worth through power, wealth, status, or achievement, and we can be reluctant to release our grip on our own way. We become impatient while waiting or weary of staying awake to the needs of the world and your presence in creation.

Free us from self-reliance, and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors.

Increase our trust in your timing, awaken us to your presence among us, and open our hearts to be filled with the hope you have promised and the holiness you proclaim, through your Word born in our lives.

Amen.

God judges us not as we are, but according to God's own righteousness and the promises held in the one who arrives in love and peace. In the name of Christ ✠ you are freed and forgiven. You are saved by grace, and ready to welcome the Savior.

Amen.

*** GATHERING HYMN**

A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing

ELW #393

*** GREETING**

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

And also with you.

*** PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

God of daily new birth, you give us new life when born of water and Spirit. Help us live into that new life, enlightened by your love, healed in your sight, and refreshed and renewed for your work for the world, through Christ, our Savior. Amen.

II. WORD

FIRST READING: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

(In his 1st Century letter to new believers in Rome, the Apostle Paul attempts to describe the promise of God's grace, reckoned to Abraham, and through trust in Christ, reckoned to all.)

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something

due. ⁵ But to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

¹⁶ For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 121 (*read responsively*)

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?

² **My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.**

³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ **He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.**

⁵ The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.

⁶ **The sun shall not strike you by day
nor the moon by night.**

⁷ The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

⁸ **The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.**

*** GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

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Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia.

*** GOSPEL: John 3:1-21**

(Addressing questions from a curious faith leader at night, Jesus words are filled with rich meaning, hearkening to the story of God from the beginning, and providing light for faith.)

The holy gospel according to John, the 3rd chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹ “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

“We Testify to What We Have Seen”

Pastor Charlie Ruud

HYMN OF THE DAY

*This Little Light of Mine
(Please stand for the final verse.)*

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH — APOSTLES’ CREED**

(With roots in the second century CE, and formalized over centuries, the Apostles' Creed continues to serve as unifying confession and a summary of core teachings of the Christian faith)

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

*** PEACE**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you.

(The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words.)

III. THANKSGIVING

ANTHEM

Arise, Your Light Has Come
Chancel Choir

ELW #314

*** OFFERTORY**

Praise, My Soul, the God of Heaven

ELW #864 v. 1

Praise, my soul, the God of heaven; joyfully your tribute bring.

Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, evermore God's praises sing.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Glorious is God's faithfulness!

*** PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

After each petition:

...Merciful God,

Hear our prayer.

*** LORD'S PRAYER**

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. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

IV. SENDING

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

*** BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

Amen.

*** SENDING HYMN**

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

ELW #807

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. May God's word light your way!

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

(The postlude sends us out to be Christ's peace in the world. You are invited to savor it.)

Our service continues with sharing fellowship in Coffee Hour in the Fellowship Hall, across the hall; and then in the world with other neighbors.

Next week in worship...

Our scripture narrative follows Jesus in the 4th chapter of the Gospel of John to a storied ancient well, where in the brightest light of day, he converses with a Samaritan woman on the margins. Amazingly, she becomes one of the first evangelists. We hear of endless "living water," and are invited into the scene to be recipients, bearers, and believers of the same assurance and life.

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