

Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

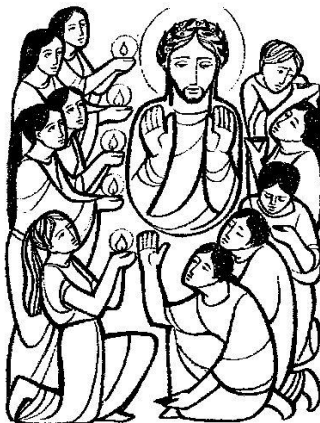
**A BIBLICAL, CONFESSIONAL AND TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION IN THE
CHICAGO REGION COMMITTED TO MINISTERING TO SINNERS
WITH THE FORGIVING PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

NOVEMBER 8, 2020

✠ DIVINE SERVICE ✠

Setting 3



A WELCOME IN JESUS' NAME to all who gather in the Lord's House today. You have joined with the seen and unseen host of God, around the throne of the Lamb, to be served by the Triune God through the preaching of His Word and the administration of the Holy Sacraments. Apart from these Means of Grace there are no Christians and there is no Church! Therefore the entire Liturgy places God at center stage as He acts towards His people through the Word and Sacraments to bring His gifts of life and salvation. That is why the Liturgy is called "Divine Service" - it is God's Service to His people! This service reaches its fulfillment in the Lord's Supper or Sacrament of the Altar.

The Day of the Lord is *"darkness, and not light"* (Amos 5:18, 20) for all who trust in their own righteousness and piety. The Lord will not accept their *"burnt offerings and grain offerings,"* nor will He look upon their *"peace offerings"* (Amos 5:22). Instead, He desires a heart of faith that trusts in Him, which lets *"justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream"* (Amos 5:24) in love for the neighbor. In order for the "lamps" of our lives to burn brightly with such love, we must be filled with the "oil" of forgiveness through faith in our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ (Matt. 25:1–4). Therefore, as we await His coming, wisdom directs us *"to the dealers"* (Matt. 25:9), that is, to the ministers of His Gospel. Thus, we wait upon the Lord, and we *"encourage one another with these words"* (1 Thess. 4:18). Waking or sleeping, we are prepared to meet Him when He comes *"with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God,"* and *"we will always be with the Lord"* (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

Prayer before Worship

O almighty, eternal God: We confess that we are poor sinners and cannot answer one time out of a thousand, when You contend with us; but with all our hearts we thank You, that You have taken our guilt from us and laid it upon Your dear Son Jesus Christ, and made Him to atone for it. We pray, graciously sustain us in faith, and so govern us by Your Holy Spirit, that we may live according to Your will, in neighborly love, service and helpfulness, and not give way to wrath or revenge, that we may not incur Your wrath, but always find in You a gracious Father; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen

- | | |
|----------|--|
| P | designates the parts of the liturgy spoken or chanted by the pastor |
| C | designates the parts of the liturgy spoken or chanted by the congregation |
| ✠ | designates the parts of the liturgy where the sign of the cross may be made |
| △ | designates a hymn that ends with a Trinitarian stanza; please stand for the final stanza |

✠ PREPARATION ✠

HYMN OF INVOCATION

514 The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us



1 The Bride - groom soon will call us, "Come to the wed - ding feast."
 2 There shall we see in glo - ry Our dear Re - deem - er's face;
 3 There God shall from all e - vil For - ev - er make us free,
 4 In that fair home shall nev - er Be si - lent mu - sic's voice;



May slum - ber not be - fall us Nor watch - ful - ness de - crease.
 The long - a - wait - ed sto - ry Of heav'n - ly joy takes place:
 From sin - ness, pain, and sad - ness, From all ad - ver - si - ty,
 With hearts and lips for - ev - er We shall in God re - joice,



May all our lamps be burn - ing With oil e - nough and more
 The pa - tri - archs shall meet us, The proph - ets' ho - ly band;
 From sick - ness, pain, and sad - ness, From trou - bles, cares, and fears,
 While an - gel hosts are rais - ing With saints from great to least



That we, with Him re - turn - ing, May find an o - pen door!
 A - pos - tles, mar - tyrs greet us In that ce - les - tial land.
 And grant us heav'n - ly glad - ness And wipe a - way our tears.
 A might - y hymn for prais - ing The Giv - er of the feast.

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INVOCATION

Matthew 28:19-20

The sign of the cross (✠) may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

P In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and
 of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.



CONFESSION OF SINS

Hebrews 10:22; Psalm 124:8; 32:5

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God, our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor sinful being.**

HOLY ABSOLUTION

John 20:19-23

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the

✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**



✠ SERVICE OF THE WORD ✠

Introit

Psalm 84:1, 9-12; antiphon, Psalm 84:3

The 84th psalm is a psalm of comfort. It praises God's Word highly over all things and exhorts us to gladly give up all good things—glory, power, joy, and whatever we desire—that we may hold onto God's Word. And if we should be like the doorkeeper, that is, the least of those in the temple, this would still be far better than to sit in all the castles of the godless. For God's Word (the psalmist says) gives victory, salvation, grace, glory, and all good things. Oh, how blessed are those who believe this and then keep it!

[Reading the Psalms with Luther, p. 200]



A Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may | lay her young,*
at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King | and my God.

C How lovely is your | dwelling place,*
O | LORD of hosts!

Behold our shield, | O God;*
look on the face of your a- | nointed!

For a day in your courts is better than a thousand | elsewhere.*
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of | wickedness.

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows
favor and | honor.*

No good thing does he withhold from those who walk up-
| rightly.

O | LORD of hosts,*
blessèd is the one who | trusts in you!

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..

A Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may | lay her young,*
at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King | and my God..

KYRIE — *Lord, Have Mercy*

Mark 10:47

- C** (sung) **Lord, have mercy upon us.**
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.



GLORIA IN EXCELSIS — *Glory to God in the Highest*

Luke

2:14; John 1:29

- P** Glory be to God on high:
C (sung) **And on earth peace, good will**
toward men.

We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we
worship Thee,
we glorify Thee, we give thanks to
Thee, for Thy great glory.



O Lord God, heav'nly King, God the Father Almighty.
O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
That takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sin of the world, receive our
prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have
mercy upon us.
For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord.
Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,
art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

SALUTATION and COLLECT OF THE DAY

2 Timothy 4:22

- P** The Lord be with you.
C (sung) **And with thy spirit.**
- P** Lord God, heavenly Father, send forth Your Son to lead home His bride, the Church, that with all the company of the redeemed we may finally enter into His eternal wedding feast; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** (sung) **Amen.**

Sit

Old Testament Reading

Amos 5:18-27

Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light, as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. "Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You shall take up Sikkuth your king, and Kiyun your star-god- your images that you made for yourselves, and I will send you into exile beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual

Revelation 7:14b; Psalm 84:5

A These are the ones coming out of
the great tribu- | lation.*



They have washed their robes

and made them white in the blood | of the Lamb.

Blessèd are those whose strength is | in you,*

in whose heart are the highways to | Zion.

Epistle

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of



God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Stand

ALLELUIA

John 6:68

C (sung) **Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.**



Holy Gospel

Matthew 25:1-13

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the Twenty-Fifth chapter.

C (sung) **Glory be to Thee, O Lord.**



"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then

all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C (sung) **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

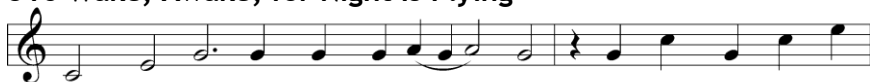
Nicene Creed

**☩ I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down
from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of
the virgin Mary and was made man; and was
crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He
suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose
again according to the Scriptures and ascended into
heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge both the
living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no
end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is
worshiped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic
Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life ✠ of the world to come. Amen.**

516 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying



1 "Wake, a - wake, for night is fly - ing," The watch-men on the
2 Zi - on hears the watch-men sing - ing, And all her heart with
3 Now let all the heav'ns a - dore Thee, Let saints and an - gels



heights are cry - ing; "A - wake, Je - ru - sa - lem, a - rise!"
joy is spring - ing; She wakes, she ris - es from her gloom.
sing be - fore Thee With harp and cym-bals' clear - est tone.



Mid - night hears the wel - come voic - es And at the thrill - ing
For her Lord comes down all - glo - rious, The strong in grace, in
Of one pearl each shin - ing por - tal, Where, join - ing with the



cry re - joic - es: "Oh, where are ye, ye vir - gins wise?
truth vic - to - rious; Her star is ris'n, her light is come.
choir im - mor - tal, We gath - er round Thy ra - diant throne.



The Bride - groom comes, a - wake! Your lamps with glad - ness take!
Now come, Thou Bless - ed One, Lord Je - sus, God's own Son,
No eye has seen the light, No ear has heard the might



Al - le - lu - ia! With brid - al care Your - selves pre - pare
Hail! Ho - san - na! We en - ter all The wed - ding hall
Of Thy glo - ry; There - fore will we E - ter - nal - ly



To meet the Bride - groom, who is near."
To eat the Sup - per at Thy call.
Sing hymns of praise and joy to Thee!

Text and tune: Public domain

Sermon



Stand

OFFERTORY

Psalm 51:10-12

C (sung) **Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Thy presence,
and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation;
and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Amen.**

**OFFERING (YOU MAY PLACE YOUR OFFERING IN THE PLATES IN THE
BACK OF THE NAVE AS YOU ARE LEAVING.)**

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

1 Timothy 2:1-4

After each petition:

After the final petition:

P let us pray to the Lord:

... one God, now and forever.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

Amen.

✠ SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT ✠



PREFACE

2 Timothy 4:22; Colossians 3:1; Psalm 136

P The Lord be with you.

C (sung) **And with thy spirit.**

P Lift up your hearts.

C (sung) **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

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

C (sung) **It is meet and right so to do.**

PROPER PREFACE

- P** It is truly good, right, and salutary..... evermore
praising You and saying:

SANCTUS — *Holy, Holy, Holy*

Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9

- C** (sung) **Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory;
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is ✕ He
that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13

- P** 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.
- C** (sung) **For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

*Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24
Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25*

PAX DOMINI — *The Peace of the Lord*

John 20:19

- P** The peace of the Lord be with you always.
- C** (sung) **Amen.**



☐ (sung) **O Christ, Thou Lamb of God,
that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.
O Christ, Thou Lamb of God,
that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.
O Christ, Thou Lamb of God,
that takest away the sin of the world, grant us Thy peace.
Amen.**

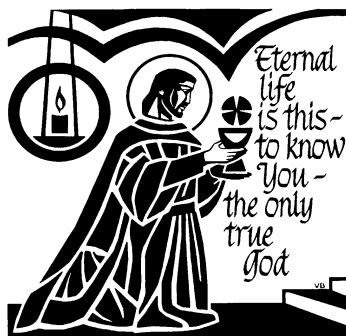
Sit

Dear Visitors and Friends: As the first Christians devoted themselves to the Lord's Supper, they also devoted themselves to the Apostles' Doctrine (Acts 2:42). The two went hand in hand. As we devote ourselves to the Lord's Supper today, we also want to be faithful to the Apostles' Doctrine.

For this reason, the congregations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod have agreed to follow the Biblical and historical practice of "Closed Communion." **If you desire to receive the Lord's Supper and are not a communicant member of Divine Shepherd, or a sister congregation in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod we respectfully ask that you not commune this morning.** Rather, we would invite you to speak with Pastor Zimmer about Holy Communion and about becoming a communicant member of this congregation. It is the sincere prayer of this congregation that our careful practice of the administration of the Lord's Supper will not be a hindrance to our fellowship with you but instead that it would lead you to appreciate the high regard we have for Christ and His Word concerning this precious gift. **Thank you for your understanding.**

DISTRIBUTION

hymns are sung as needed



663 Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray



1 Rise, my soul, to watch and pray; From your sleep a - wak -
 2 Watch a - gainst the dev - il's snares Lest a - sleep he find
 3 Watch! Let not the wick - ed world With its lies de - feat
 4 Watch a - gainst your-self, my soul, Lest with grace you tri -
 5 But while watch-ing, al - so pray To the Lord un - ceas -



en! Be not by the e - vil day Un - a - wares o'er -
 you; For in - deed no pains he spares To de - ceive and
 you Lest with bold de - cep - tions hurled It be - tray and
 fle; Let not self your thoughts con - trol Nor God's mer - cy
 ing. God pro - tects you day by day, Strength and faith in -



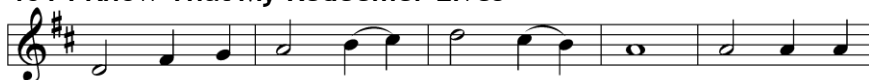
tak - en; For the foe, Well we know, Is a
 blind you. Sa - tan's prey Oft are they Who se -
 cheat you. Watch and see Lest there be Faith - less
 sti - fle. Pride and sin Lurk with - in, All your
 creas - ing, So that still Mind and will Shall u -



har - vest reap - ing While the saints are sleep - ing.
 cure are sleep - ing And no watch are keep - ing.
 friends to charm you, Who but seek to harm you.
 hopes to shat - ter; Heed not when they flat - ter.
 nite to serve Him And for - ev - er love Him.

Tune and text: Public domain

461 I Know That My Redeemer Lives



1 I know that my Re - deem - er lives; What com - fort
 2 He lives tri - um - phant from the grave; He lives e -
 3 He lives to bless me with His love; He lives to
 4 He lives to grant me rich sup - ply; He lives to



this sweet sen - tence gives! He lives, He lives, who
 ter - nal - ly to save; He lives all - glo - rious
 plead for me a - bove; He lives my hun - gry
 guide me with His eye; He lives to com - fort



once was dead; He lives, my ev - er - liv - ing head.
 in the sky; He lives ex - alt - ed there on high.
 soul to feed; He lives to help in time of need.
 me when faint; He lives to hear my soul's com - plaint.

- 5 He lives to silence all my fears;
 He lives to wipe away my tears;
 He lives to calm my troubled heart;
 He lives all blessings to impart.
- 6 He lives, my kind, wise, heav'nly friend;
 He lives and loves me to the end;
 He lives, and while He lives, I'll sing;
 He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.
- 7 He lives and grants me daily breath;
 He lives, and I shall conquer death;
 He lives my mansion to prepare;
 He lives to bring me safely there.
- 8 He lives, all glory to His name!
 He lives, my Jesus, still the same;
 Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:
 I know that my Redeemer lives!

Tune and text: Public domain

496 Holy Spirit, Light Divine



- 1 Ho - ly Spir - it, light di - vine, Shine up - on this heart of mine;
- 2 Let me see my Sav - ior's face, Let me all His beau - ties trace;
- 3 Ho - ly Spir - it, pow'r di - vine, Cleanse this guilt - y heart of mine;
- 4 Ho - ly Spir - it, joy di - vine, Cheer this sad - dened heart of mine;
- 5 Ho - ly Spir - it, all di - vine, Dwell with - in this heart of mine;



Chase the shades of night a - way, Turn the dark - ness in - to day.
 Show those glo - rious truths to me Which are on - ly known to Thee.
 In Thy mer - cy pit - y me, From sin's bond - age set me free.
 Yield a sa - cred, set - tled peace, Let it grow and still in - crease.
 Cast down ev - 'ry i - dol throne, Reign su - preme, and reign a - lone.

Tune and text: Public domain

Stand

DISMISSAL

P The eating and drinking of your Savior's sacred body and blood strengthen and preserve you in the one true Christian faith unto life everlasting. Depart in the joy of His Peace.

C **Amen.**

NUNC DIMITTIS — *Song of Simeon*

Luke 2:29-32

C (sung) **Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace
according to Thy Word,
for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,
which Thou has prepared before the face of all people,
a Light to lighten the Gentiles
and the Glory of Thy people Israel.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

THANKSGIVING

Psalm 107:1

P Oh, give thanks unto the Lord for He is good,

C (sung) **and His mercy endureth forever.**

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT

P We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C (sung) **Amen.**



SALUTATION and BENEDICAMUS

2 Timothy 4:22

- P** The Lord be with you.
C (sung) **And with thy spirit.**
P Bless we the Lord.
C (sung) **Thanks be to God.**

BENEDICTION

Numbers 6:24-26

- P** The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you
peace.
C (sung) **Amen, amen, amen.**



CLOSING HYMN

515 Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers



1 Re - joice, re - joice, be - liev - ers, And let your lights ap - pear;
 2 The watch - ers on the moun - tain Pro - claim the Bride - groom near;
 3 The saints, who here in pa - tience Their cross and suf - f'rings bore,
 4 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;
 The eve - ning is ad - vanc - ing, And dark - er night is near.
 Go forth as He ap - proach - es With al - le - lu - ias clear.
 Shall live and reign for - ev - er When sor - row is no more.
 A - rise, O Sun so longed for, O'er this be - night - ed sphere.
 The Bride - groom is a - ris - ing And soon is draw - ing nigh.
 The mar - riage feast is wait - ing; The gates wide o - pen stand.
 A - round the throne of glo - ry The Lamb they shall be - hold;
 With hearts and hands up - lift - ed, We plead, O Lord, to see
 Up, pray and watch and wres - tle; At mid - night comes the cry.
 A - rise, O heirs of glo - ry; The Bride - groom is at hand.
 In tri - umph cast be - fore Him Their di - a - dems of gold.
 The day of earth's re - demp - tion That sets Your peo - ple free!

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✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠

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The Lutheran Church has always retained ceremonies that support the Gospel—the good news that we are saved by *grace alone* through *faith alone* in *Christ alone*. Such laudable ceremonies include making the sign of the cross in remembrance of Holy Baptism. Those places in the service where Lutherans have traditionally made the sign of the cross are marked with a cross (✠).

Better is ONE day in
 your courts than
 thousands elsewhere;

PSALM 84:10

First I saw this well, namely, that the free gift is absolutely necessary for obtaining the light and the heavenly life, and I worked anxiously and diligently to understand the well-known statement in Rom. 1:17: "The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel." Then I sought and knocked for a long time (cf. Matt. 7:7), for that expression "the righteousness of God" stood in the way. It was commonly explained by saying that the righteousness of God is the power of God by which God Himself is formally righteous and condemns sinners. This is the way all teachers except Augustine had interpreted this passage: the righteousness of God, that is, the wrath of God.

But every time I read this passage, I always wished that God had never revealed the Gospel—for who could love a God who is angry, judges, and condemns?—until finally, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, I weighed more carefully the passage in Habakkuk (2:4), where I read: "The righteous shall live by his faith."

From this I concluded that life must come from faith. In this way I related the abstract to the concrete,

and all Holy Scripture and heaven itself were opened to me.

At this time, however we see that great light very clearly, and we may enjoy it richly. But we despise and disdain this jewel and heavenly treasure. Accordingly, if one day it should be taken away again, we shall cry and knock once more, as Christ says about the foolish virgins in the parable (cf. Matt. 25:11). But we shall cry and knock in vain.

Therefore, let us fear God and be grateful. Above all, however, my own example and the example of others should move you. We lived in death and hell and did not have the blessing so abundantly as you have it. Therefore, occupy yourselves diligently with the doctrine of the blessing, and think about it, in order that you may be able to keep it yourselves and also to make it known to others. As for ourselves, we have done our duty.

✠ Martin Luther ✠