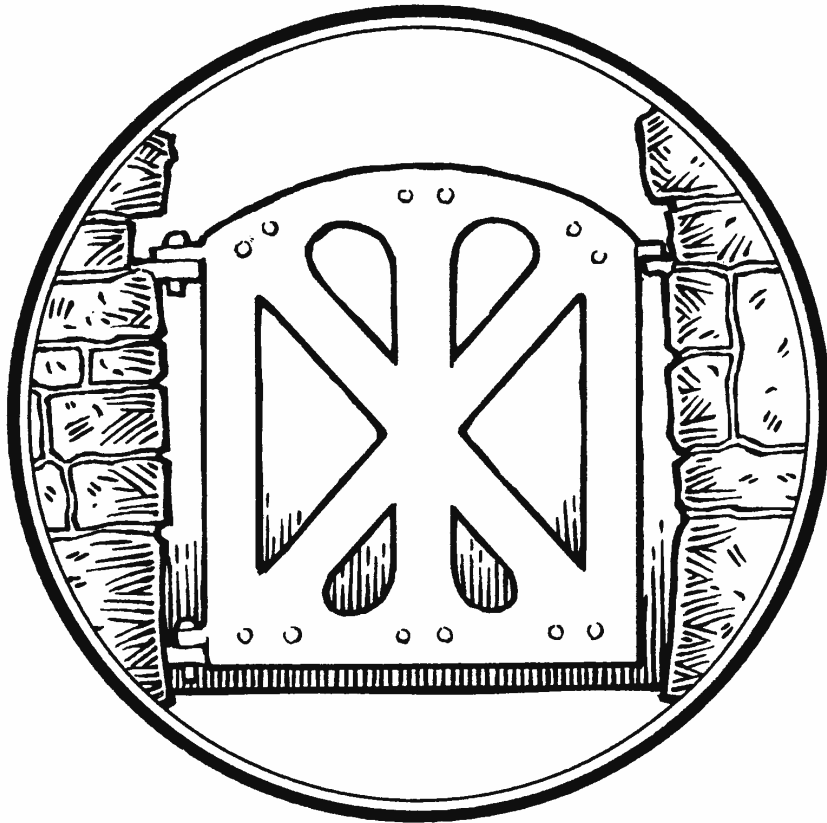


# Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH  
SMITHVILLE, TEXAS

Divine Service with Holy Communion  
10 AM

Bible Class and Sunday School  
8:45 AM



## Grace Lutheran Church – Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

308 Byrne St. Smithville, TX 78957

512-237-2108 [glcs.org](http://glcs.org)

Pastor David Woelmer

**GRACE LUTHERAN  
CHURCH**  
SMITHVILLE, TX

Welcome to Grace Lutheran Church! We give thanks that our gracious Lord Jesus Christ has gathered us together here for his Divine Service. Today again our Lord comes to serve us and lavish us with his gifts of life, forgiveness, and salvation. Rejoicing in those wonderful gifts, we sing with David in Psalm 84: “How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! A day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.”

Holy Communion is a sacred gift from Christ to His Church. In this meal, He gives His true body and blood under bread and wine into our mouths in order to forgive our sins and strengthen our union with Him and with one another (Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 10:16-17). Christians receive this Sacrament trusting Jesus’ own words, repenting of all their sin, and confessing the faith taught in Holy Scripture together in unity (Matt. 5:23-24; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:17-26). For this reason, and because those who eat and drink our Lord’s body and blood unworthily do so to their great harm (1 Cor. 11:27-34), we ask that those who have not yet been instructed and those who are not members of a congregation in fellowship with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to speak with the pastor before receiving Holy Communion.

In our readings today: Although we “were straying like sheep,” the Lord Jesus Christ has willingly suffered and died for us, bearing our sins “in his body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24-25). We are healed by His wounds (1 Peter 2:24), and in His resurrection He gathers us to Himself as our Good Shepherd, by whose righteousness we “have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Now through other shepherds whom He calls and sends in His name, He guards and keeps us in the green pastures of His Church, leading us beside the quiet waters of our Baptism and spreading the feast of His table before us. Since He has called us by the Gospel to be His own dear sheep, we also “hear his voice” and “know his voice” (John 10:3-4) in the faithful preaching of His Gospel, and we follow Him by faith. When we receive His Gospel, we have the abundant life and common unity of the entire flock under one Good Shepherd, in “the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship” and in “the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42)

**A Prayer Before Worship:** *O Lord, our creator, redeemer, and comforter, as we come together to worship You in spirit and in truth, we humbly pray that You would open our hearts to the preaching of Your Word so that we may repent of our sins, believe in Jesus Christ as our only Savior, and grow in grace and holiness. Hear us for His sake. Amen.*

**Exchange of Peace:** By the second century, it was common for Christians to follow St. Paul’s encouragement to “greet one another with a holy kiss” (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12) during the Church’s worship. Though the place in the worship service and the manner of this greeting have changed throughout the Church’s history, it has always served as a sign of reconciliation and of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Matthew 5:22-24; Ephesians 4:2-3). It’s more than a simple “holy howdy” or a warm greeting to one another. Instead, it’s an extension of the reconciliation and forgiveness that Jesus has accomplished for us. We greet one another in the name of the Lord, saying, “Peace be with you.”

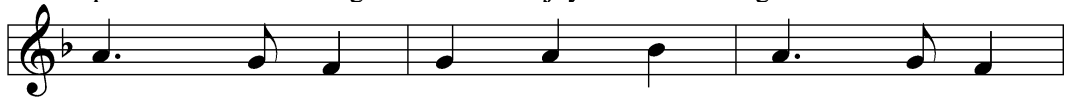
*Please stand and remain standing*



1 Shep - herd of ten - der youth, Guid - ing in  
 2 You are the ho - ly Lord, O all - sub -  
 3 You are the great High Priest; You have pre -  
 4 O ev - er be our guide, Our shep - herd,  
 5 So now, and till we die, Sound we Your



love and truth Through de - vious ways; Christ, our tri -  
 du - ing Word, Heal - er of strife. Your - self You  
 pared the feast Of ho - ly love; And in our  
 and our pride, Our staff and song. Je - sus, O  
 prais - es high And joy - ful sing: In - fants and



um - phant king, We come Your name to sing  
 did a - base That from sin's deep dis - grace  
 mor - tal pain None calls on You in vain;  
 Christ of God, By Your en - dur - ing Word  
 all the throng, Who to the Church be - long,



And here our chil - dren bring To join Your praise.  
 You so might save our race And give us life.  
 Our plea do not dis - dain; Help from a - bove.  
 Lead us where You have trod; Make our faith strong.  
 U - nite to swell the song To Christ, our king!

**INVOCATION:** *(God has given us our beginning in Baptism, so the Divine Service begins in His Name).*

*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:** *(We come into the presence of our holy God, recognizing our sin and pleading for mercy on account of Christ).*

**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,

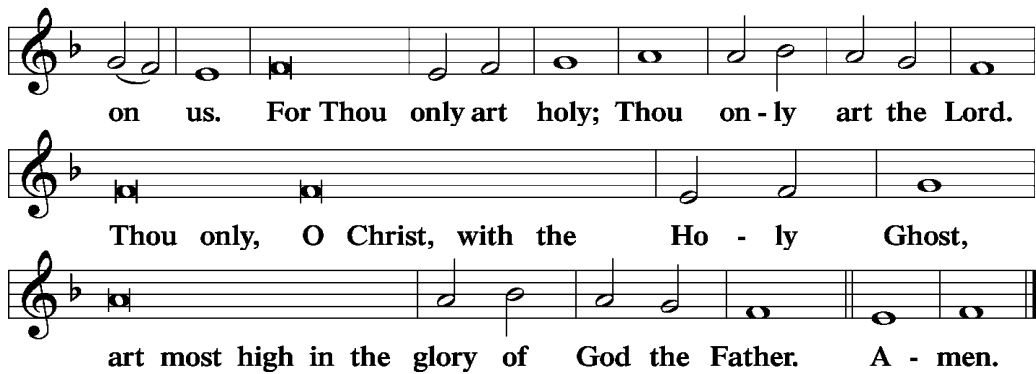
**C** and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

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



**Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up - on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.**

**Glory be to God on high: and on earth peace, good - will toward men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we wor - ship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee, for Thy great glory. O Lord God, heav'n - ly King, God the Fa - ther Al - mighty. O Lord, the only begotten Son, Je - sus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy up - on us. Thou that takest away the sin of the world, re - ceive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy up -**



on us. For Thou only art holy; Thou on-ly art the Lord.  
 Thou only, O Christ, with the Ho-ly Ghost,  
 art most high in the glory of God the Father. A - men.

SALUTATION: *(The pastor and congregation greet each other in the Lord's presence).*



**P** The Lord be with you.  
**G** And with thy spir - it.

COLLECT OF THE DAY: *(These prayers have been used for over 1,500 years. They "collect" the Gospel theme for the day).*

**P** Let us pray.

Almighty God, merciful Father, since You have wakened from death the Shepherd of Your sheep, grant us Your Holy Spirit that when we hear the voice of our Shepherd we may know Him who calls us each by name and follow where He leads; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



**G** A - men.

Sit

## OLD TESTAMENT READING

*Acts 2:42-47*

<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup>And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup>And all who believed were together and had all things in common. <sup>45</sup>And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup>And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

**P** This is the Word of the Lord.

**G** Thanks be to God.

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup>He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters.

<sup>3</sup>He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.

## EPISTLE READING

1 Peter 2:19–25

<sup>19</sup>This is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

<sup>20</sup>For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. <sup>21</sup>For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup>He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup>When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup>He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup>For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

**P** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

Stand

## ALLELUIA

LSB 190



**C** Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia.

## HOLY GOSPEL

John 10:1–10

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the tenth chapter.



**C** Glo - ry be to Thee, O Lord.

<sup>1</sup>[Jesus said:] “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup>But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own

sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” <sup>6</sup>This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

<sup>7</sup>So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup>I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.



**C** Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

APOSTLES' CREED (*From the Latin, "Credo," meaning "I believe." We say back to God what He says to us.*)

**C** I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life ✠ everlasting. Amen.

Sit

HYMN OF THE DAY:

*The King of Love My Shepherd Is*

LSB 709



1 The King of love my shep - herd is, Whose good - ness  
2 Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow, My ran - somed  
3 Per - verse and fool - ish oft I strayed, But yet in  
4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill With Thee, dear



fail - eth nev - er; I noth - ing lack if  
 soul He lead - eth And, where the ver - dant  
 love He sought me And on His shoul - der  
 Lord, be - side me, Thy rod and staff my



I am His And He is mine for - ev - er.  
 pas - tures grow, With food ce - les - tial feed - eth.  
 gent - ly laid And home re - joic - ing brought me.  
 com - fort still, Thy cross be - fore to guide me.

5 Thou spreadst a table in my sight;  
 Thine unction grace bestoweth;  
 And, oh, what transport of delight  
 From Thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so through all the length of days  
 Thy goodness faileth never;  
 Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise  
 Within Thy house forever!

**SERMON** "Many Voices, One Shepherd"

*(Based on one of the Scripture readings, the pastor proclaims God's Word of Law and Gospel for our lives today).*

Stand

**OFFERTORY** *(The congregation responds to God's forgiveness with sacrifices of praise).*



**C** Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -  
 new a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a -

way from Thy pres - ence, and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it

from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of Thy sal - va -

tion, and up - hold me with Thy free spir - it. A - men.

Sit

OFFERING: *(The congregation responds to God's forgiveness by bringing Him the first fruits of what He has given).*

Stand

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH: *(The congregation prays for the Church and for all people throughout the world).*

**P** Lord, in Your mercy,

**G** hear our prayer.

## SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

PREFACE AND PROPER PREFACE: *(We praise and thank God for what He does for us in the Lord's Supper).* LSB 194



**P** The Lord be with you.



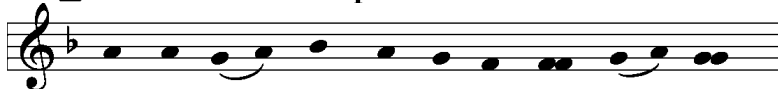
**G** And with thy spir - it.



**P** Lift up your hearts.



**G** We lift them up un - to the Lord.



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



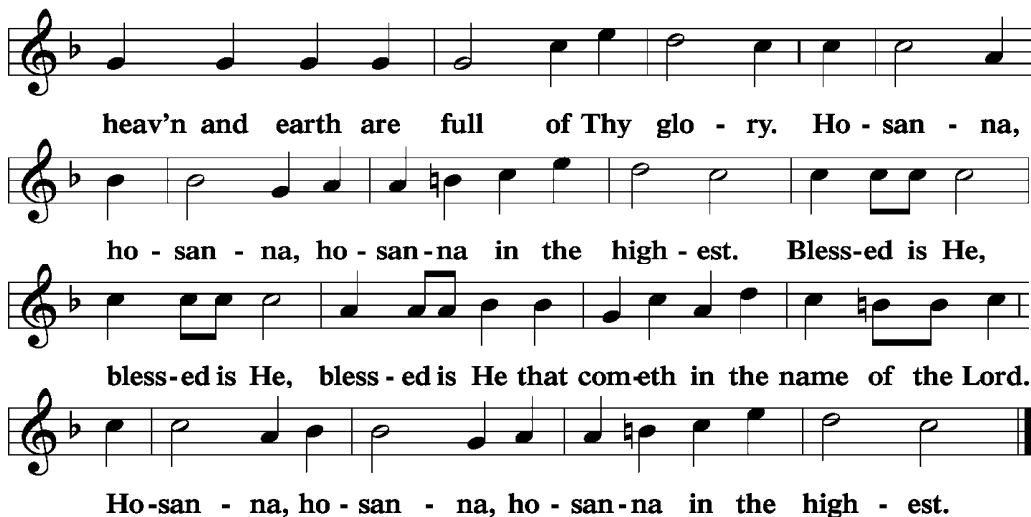
**G** It is meet and right so to do.

**P** It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God. And most especially are we bound to praise You on this day for the glorious resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, the very Paschal Lamb, who was sacrificed for us and bore the sins of the world. By His dying He has destroyed death, and by His rising again He has restored to us everlasting life. Therefore with Mary Magdalene, Peter and John, and with all the witnesses of the resurrection, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS: *(Latin for "holy." Heaven joins earth as we cry out with the heavenly host to welcome our Savior Jesus).* LSB 195



**G** Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth;



heav'n and earth are full of Thy glo - ry. Ho - san - na,  
 ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is He,  
 bless - ed is He, bless - ed is He that com - eth in the name of the Lord.  
 Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

LORD'S PRAYER: *(We pray the words that Jesus gave us to pray, trusting that our Father will hear and answer us).* LSB 197

**P** Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**G** 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.

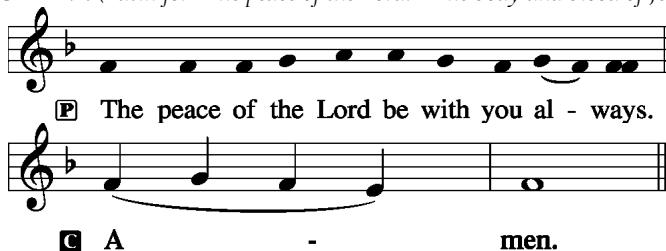
WORDS OF OUR LORD *(Jesus tells us that He gives us His body and blood under the bread and the wine).* LSB 197

**P** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My  $\text{✠}$  body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My  $\text{✠}$  blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

PAX DOMINI: *(Latin for "The peace of the Lord." The body and blood of Jesus gives us peace).*

LSB 197



**P** The peace of the Lord be with you al - ways.  
**G** A - men.

**■** O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak-est a-way the sin of the  
 world, have mer-cy up - on us. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that  
 tak-est a-way the sin of the world, have mer-cy up - on us.  
 O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak-est a-way the sin of the  
 world, grant us Thy peace. A - - men.

Sit

Silent Prayer before Communing:

*Dear Savior, at your gracious invitation I come to Your table to eat and drink Your holy body and blood. Let me find favor in Your eyes to receive this holy Sacrament in faith for the salvation of my soul at the glory of Your holy name; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want*

LSB 710

1 The Lord's my shep - herd, I'll not want; He makes me  
 2 My soul He doth re - store a - gain And me to  
 3 Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale, Yet will I  
 4 My ta - ble Thou hast fur - nish - ed In pres - ence  
 5 Good-ness and mer - cy all my life Shall sure - ly  
  
 down to lie In pas - tures green; He  
 walk doth make With - in the paths of  
 fear no ill; For Thou art with me,  
 of my foes; My head Thou dost with  
 fol - low me; And in God's house for -



lead - eth me The qui - et wa - ters by.  
 righ - teous - ness, E'en for His own name's sake.  
 and Thy rod And staff me com - fort still.  
 oil a - noint, And my cup o - ver - flows.  
 ev - er - more My dwell - ing place shall be.

*I Am Jesus' Little Lamb*

LSB 740



1 I am Je - sus' lit - tle lamb, Ev - er glad at  
 2 Day by day, at home, a - way, Je - sus is my  
 3 Who so hap - py as I am, E - ven now the



heart I am; For my Shep - herd gent - ly guides me,  
 staff and stay. When I hun - ger, Je - sus feeds me,  
 Shep - herd's lamb? And when my short life is end - ed,



Knows my need and well pro - vides me, Loves me ev - 'ry  
 In - to pleas - ant pas - tures leads me; When I thirst, He  
 By His an - gel host at - tend - ed, He shall fold me



day the same, E - ven calls me by my name.  
 bids me go Where the qui - et wa - ters flow.  
 to His breast, There with - in His arms to rest.



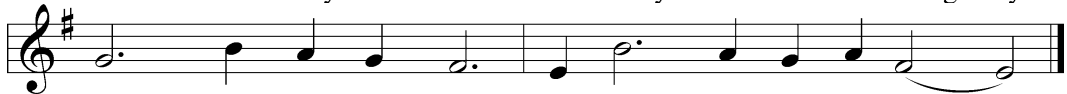
1 O lit - tle flock, fear not the foe Who mad - ly  
 2 Be of good cheer; your cause be - longs To Him who  
 3 As true as God's own Word is true, Not earth nor  
 4 A - men, Lord Je - sus, grant our prayer; Great Cap - tain,



seeks your o - ver - throw; Dread not his rage and pow'r.  
 can a - venge your wrongs; Leave it to Him, our Lord.  
 hell's sa - tan - ic crew A - gainst us shall pre - vail.  
 now Thine arm make bare, Fight for us once a - gain!



And though your cour - age some-times faints, His seem - ing  
 Though hid - den yet from mor - tal eyes, His Gid - eon  
 Their might? A joke, a mere fa - cade! God is with  
 So shall Thy saints and mar - tyrs raise A might - y



tri - umph o'er God's saints Lasts but a lit - tle hour.  
 shall for you a - rise, Up - hold you and His Word.  
 us and we with God— Our vic - t'ry can - not fail.  
 cho - rus to Thy praise For - ev - er - more. A - men.

Silent Prayer after Communing:

*Almighty and everlasting God, I thank and praise You for feeding me the life-giving body and blood of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Send Your Holy Spirit that, having with my mouth received the Sacrament, I may by faith obtain and eternally enjoy Your divine grace, the forgiveness of my sins, unity with Christ, and life eternal; through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.*

Stand

*In dismissing the communicants, the following is said:*

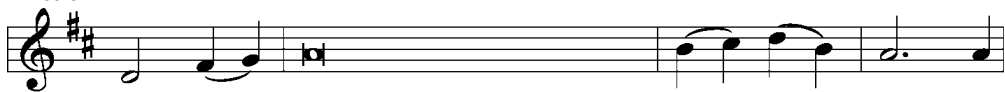
**P** The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. Depart ✠ in peace.

**G** Amen.

POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE: *(Having received Christ in the Sacrament, we give thanks and go forth in peace).*

Nunc Dimittis

LSB 199



**G** Lord, now letttest Thou Thy servant de - part in peace ac-



cord - ing to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,

which Thou hast pre - pared be - fore the face of all people,  
 a light to light - en the Gen - tiles and the glo - ry of Thy  
 peo - ple Is - ra - el. Glo - ry be to the Father and  
 to the Son and to the Ho - ly Ghost; as it was in the beginning,  
 is now, and ev - er shall be, world without end. A - men.

THANKSGIVING

**A** O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,  
**C** and His mercy endureth for - ev - er.

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT: *(We thank God for what He has done and ask that it would show forth in our lives).*

**P** Let us pray.

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, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** A - men.

BENEDICAMUS

**P** The Lord be with you.  
**C** And with thy spir - it.



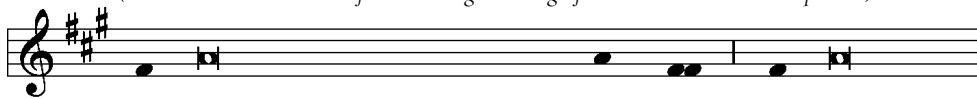
**A** Bless we the Lord.



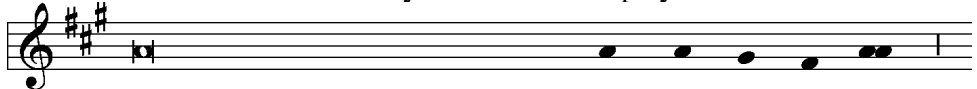
**C** Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTION: *(The Divine Service ends just as it began. We go forth with God's name upon us).*

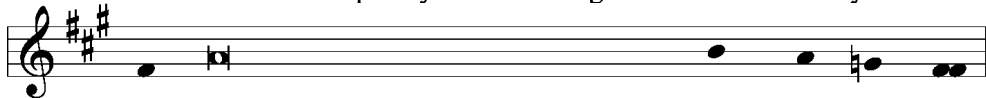
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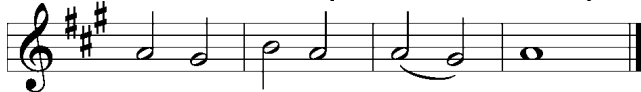
**P** The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make



His face shine upon you and be gra - cious un - to you.



The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.



**C** A-men, a-men, a - men.

Sit

CLOSING HYMN:

*Awake, My Heart, with Gladness*

LSB 467



1 A - wake, my heart, with glad - ness, See what to - day is done;  
2 The foe in tri - umph shout - ed When Christ lay in the tomb;  
3 This is a sight that glad - dens—What peace it doth im - part!  
4 Now hell, its prince, the dev - il, Of all their pow'r are shorn;



Now, af - ter gloom and sad - ness, Comes forth the glo - rious sun.  
But lo, he now is rout - ed, His boast is turned to gloom.  
Now noth - ing ev - er sad - dens The joy with - in my heart.  
Now I am safe from e - vil, And sin I laugh to scorn.



My Sav - ior there was laid Where our bed must be made  
 For Christ a - gain is free; In glo - rious vic - to - ry  
 No gloom shall ev - er shake, No foe shall ev - er take  
 Grim death with all its might Can - not my soul af - fright;



When to the realms of light Our spir - it wings its flight.  
 He who is strong to save Has tri - umphed o'er the grave.  
 The hope which God's own Son In love for me has won.  
 It is a pow'r - less form, How - e'er it rave and storm.

5 The world against me rages,  
 Its fury I disdain;  
 Though bitter war it wages,  
 Its work is all in vain.  
 My heart from care is free,  
 No trouble troubles me.  
 Misfortune now is play,  
 And night is bright as day.

7 He brings me to the portal  
 That leads to bliss untold,  
 Whereon this rhyme immortal  
 Is found in script of gold:  
 "Who there My cross has shared  
 Finds here a crown prepared;  
 Who there with Me has died  
 Shall here be glorified."

6 Now I will cling forever  
 To Christ, my Savior true;  
 My Lord will leave me never,  
 Whate'er He passes through.  
 He rends death's iron chain;  
 He breaks through sin and pain;  
 He shatters hell's grim thrall;  
 I follow Him through all.

**Silent Prayer After Worship**

*Almighty and merciful God, we have again worshiped in Your presence and received both forgiveness for our many sins and the assurance of Your love in Jesus Christ. We thank You for this undeserved grace and ask You to keep us in faith until we inherit eternal salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**DISMISSAL**

**POSTLUDE**

### Text Background

Paul Gerhardt (1607-76) employs the pronouns “I” and “me” in many of his hymns and especially this month’s hymn, “Awake, My Heart, with Gladness.” He wants you to know that everything that Jesus does is for your sake and benefit. This is how we approach not only the whole church year, but especially the Easter season. The resurrection of Christ means that He is victorious over Satan, sin, death, and hell *for you*. He died for you, bearing your sins in His own body on the tree of the cross. He rose for you, breaking the shackles of death and bursting out of the grave. And now, there is no longer any charge against you, no more condemnation, no more sin or guilt in you. The devil and the world have no more power over you, because the resurrection of Christ from the dead is *your* resurrection.

### Text Commentary

**Stanza 1 & 2:** “Today” we see what has been done. Our Savior was laid in the “grave-bed” that we all deserve because of our sin. He entered the darkness we must enter, taking on our flesh and blood so that “through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death” and free those enslaved by its fear (Heb. 2:14–15). It was then that the “foe in triumph shouted.” But the gloom and sadness of Good Friday gave way to the glorious light of Easter morning. It was then that the foe’s boast was “turned to gloom,” for the One who is “strong to save has triumphed o’er the grave.” Christ crushed the ancient serpent (Genesis 3:15) and cast out the ruler of this world (John 12:31) when He went and “disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame” (Col. 2:15) by His death and resurrection. Christ’s victory means the night of sin and death is over. The battle is finished! Because Christ has gone before us, death has become the portal from the darkness of this life to God’s eternal light. “The Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended” (Isa. 60:20).

**Stanzas 3, 4, & 5:** “Peace” is the message Christ brings to his frightened disciples (John 20:21, 26) and to us. The God of hope fills us “with all joy and peace in believing” (Romans 15:13). Gerhardt makes some bold yet truthful claims about what this Easter message means:

- Nothing can ever “sadden” the “joy within my heart.”
- No gloom or foe can ever “shake” or “take” the hope which Christ has won for me.
- I am “safe” from evil, I can “laugh” at sin, and I am not afraid of death since hell and the devil have been stripped of its power.
- I am “free” from care, “untroubled” by trouble, and “playful” with misfortune since the world’s raging fury has been defeated and night has turned into day. Commenting on Psalm 50:15, Martin Luther wrote, “*All of the misfortunes we experience are nothing but a joyful game that God plays with us...the Father will gladly and quickly lend a hand.*”

We now sing with confidence, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15:55). Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39). Therefore, we give thanks, for “God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

**Stanzas 6 & 7:** Faith clings to Christ above all things, trusting His promise: “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” To belong to Him is to share His path, for we long “to know him and the power of his resurrection,” and to “share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Phil. 3:10). The Christian life is shaped by daily repentance, suffering, and endurance, yet always with this hope: “that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:11). Those who share Christ’s death in Holy Baptism will also share His life (Romans 6:4), for the way of the cross leads to the throne. Christ promises, “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne” (Rev. 3:21). Whoever dies with Christ will live and reign with Him forever.



