

# Service of Holy Communion

## November 15, 2020

### WELCOME

### PRELUDE

“God Is So Good” arr by Venita MacGorman

Hand Bell Choir

### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, in whose image we are made,  
who claims us and calls us beloved.

**Amen.**

*Silence for reflection*

Holy One, **we confess that we are not awake for you. We are not faithful in using your gifts. We forget the least of our siblings. We do not see your beautiful image in one another. We are infected by sin that divides your beloved community. Open our hearts to your coming, open our eyes to see you in our neighbor, open our hands to serve your creation. Amen.**

Beloved, we are God’s children, and Jesus, our Beloved, opens the door to us.

Through † Jesus you are forgiven, by Jesus you are welcome, in Jesus you are called to rejoice! Let us live in the promises prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

**Amen.**

### GATHERING SONG #887 “This Is My Song” verse 1 & 2

1 This is my song, O God of all the nations,  
a song of peace for lands afar and mine.  
This is my home, the country where my heart is;  
here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine;  
but other hearts in other lands are beating  
with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

2 My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,  
and sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine.  
But other lands have sunlight too, and clover,  
and skies are ev'rywhere as blue as mine.  
So hear my song, O God of all the nations,  
a song of peace for their land and for mine.

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## GREETING

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

**And also with you.**

## HYMN OF PRAISE



1 Glo-ry be to God in heav-en; peace, good-will to all the earth.  
 2 Glo-ry be to Christ for - ev - er, Lamb of God and Lord of love.  
 3 Ho - ly One we now ac-claim you; Lord a - lone, to you we call;



Might-y God of all cre - a - tion, Fa - ther of sur - pass - ing worth:  
 Son of God and gra - cious Sav - ior, you have come from heav'n a - bove;  
 Ho - ly One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:



we ex - alt you, we a - dore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.  
 on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.  
 Je - sus Christ, with God the Spir - it, in the Fa - ther's splen - dor bright.



Saints and an - gels bow be - fore you; here on earth our songs we raise.  
 Hear our prayer; re - store, for - give us; in your prom - ise firm we stand.  
 For the peace that we in - her - it, glo - ry be to God on high!

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Righteous God, **our merciful master, you own the earth and all its peoples, and you give us all that we have. Inspire us to serve you with justice and wisdom, and prepare us for the joy of the day of your coming, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

## THE WORD

### **FIRST READING: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18**

*Zephaniah (like the prophet Amos in last week's first reading) presents the day of the LORD as one of judgment and wrath. Descriptions of the last day in the New Testament include details taken from Old Testament accounts of the day of the LORD.*

<sup>7</sup>Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is at hand;  
the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests.

<sup>12</sup>At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,  
and I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs,  
those who say in their hearts,

"The LORD will not do good, nor will he do harm."

<sup>13</sup>Their wealth shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste.

Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them;  
though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.

<sup>14</sup>The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast;  
the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there.

<sup>15</sup>That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish,  
a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness,

<sup>16</sup>a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities  
and against the lofty battlements.

<sup>17</sup>I will bring such distress upon people that they shall walk like the blind;  
because they have sinned against the LORD,  
their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung.

<sup>18</sup>Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them  
on the day of the LORD's wrath;  
in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed;  
for a full, a terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

The Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

### **PSALM: Psalm 90:1-8, 12**

<sup>1</sup>Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to another.

<sup>2</sup>**Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the earth were born,  
from age to age you are God.**

<sup>3</sup>You turn us back to the dust and say, "Turn back, O children of earth."

<sup>4</sup>**For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past  
and like a watch in the night;**

<sup>5</sup>you sweep them away like a dream, they fade away suddenly like the grass:

<sup>6</sup>**in the morning it is green and flourishes;  
in the evening it is dried up and withered.**

<sup>7</sup>For we are consumed by your anger; we are afraid because of your wrath.

<sup>8</sup>**Our iniquities you have set before you, and our secret sins in the light of your countenance.**

<sup>12</sup>**So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.**

**SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

*Though we do not know and cannot calculate the day of Christ's return, we live faithfully in the here and now as we anticipate the day when we will be given eternal salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

<sup>1</sup>Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. <sup>2</sup>For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup>When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! <sup>4</sup>But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; <sup>5</sup>for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. <sup>6</sup>So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; <sup>7</sup>for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup>But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup>For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup>who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. <sup>11</sup>Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

The Word of the Lord  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord and Sav - ior: o - pen now your sav - ing word.



Let it burn like fire with - in us; speak un - til our hearts are stirred.



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 25:14-30**

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the twenty-fifth chapter

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus tells a parable about his second coming, indicating that it is not sufficient merely to maintain things as they are. Those who await his return should make good use of the gifts that God has provided them.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>14</sup>“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup>to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup>The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup>In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup>But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. <sup>19</sup>After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ <sup>21</sup>His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>22</sup>And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ <sup>23</sup>His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>24</sup>Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; <sup>25</sup>so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ <sup>26</sup>But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? <sup>27</sup>Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. <sup>28</sup>So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. <sup>30</sup>As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ”

The Gospel of the Lord

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON**

“Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground.” Those few words might tell us all we need to know about this parable. The third servant was afraid. He believed his master was harsh. He did not trust his master, but feared the master would find fault with him whatever he tried to do with his

one talent, so to be safe, he buried what his master had given him, and gave it back later, intact and unmodified.

It seems to be human nature that when we read something that has been written, we assume it is true. But in this case, we do not know whether the master was, actually, a harsh man. All we have as testimony are the words of the third servant who, perhaps, didn't make the best decision regarding what had been entrusted to him. Should we accept the third slave's assessment? What about the other slaves; do they have the same opinion of the master? Another truth about human nature is that words of fear or critique hit us more deeply and stay with us longer than do kind words and compliments.

Let's take a closer look at the parable, to see whether, in fact, the master is a harsh man. The first slave acts with confidence – "He went off at once and traded with [his five talents], and made five more talents." It doesn't sound like he was afraid of the master being hard on him or unfair with him. Then comes the second slave, the one who was given two talents. "In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents." 'In the same way' it says – without hesitation, trusting in himself and in his situation. He had no reason to be afraid.

The story continues with these words, "But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money." I can picture the guy, hunched over and glancing around furtively as he dug his hole, making sure no one was watching him, and then packing the dirt tightly on top and spreading some leaves or grass over it to make it look undisturbed. Why was he so afraid?

When the master returns home, the first and second slave give the master an account of their transactions. This interaction is described simply, indicating that the matter was handled simply, without need for elaboration or caution. The master commends each of the first two slaves saying, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave." Does that sound like something a harsh master, a mean, exacting tyrant, would say to his employees? "Well done, good and trustworthy servant?" Then he gives each of those slaves a promotion. "You've been faithful in a few things," he says, expressing his confidence in their abilities. "I'll put you in charge of lots of things." So far we have no reason to think the master is anything other than fair and good to his employees.

Then comes the third slave with his accusations of the master being hard and ungenerous, quick to punish his slaves for mistakes. "I knew you were a harsh man," he says. The master, perhaps shocked or outraged replies, "You **knew**, did you..." That sounds like the sort of thing my Dad would have said when I got something completely and foolishly wrong. "You **knew**, did you?"

The third slave lived and acted in fear because he perceived his master as harsh and cruel. He was convinced that was his master's character. Picture him with me again – hunched over and scurrying off as he looks 'this way' and 'that' to make sure he isn't being followed... He has made his world small, locked tight around himself so nothing surprising, nothing he hasn't planned for can happen to him. In contrast, the first two slaves lived in confidence. Their world was broad, high, and open. Instead of seeing limits that confined, they saw possibilities that stretched before them. They

perceived their master as trustworthy and fair, and because of that, they flourished. In each case, *how* the slave perceived reality affected the outcome of his actions and his encounter with the master.

Perception shaped the reality of these three slaves – what they felt, how they acted, and the results of their actions. It was true then and it is true now – the way we view the world around us – whether safe or dangerous, whether full of possibility or on a course to destruction – how we view the world has a tremendous effect on how we then experience the world.

There's plenty to be anxious about these days: we might be anxious about COVID, fearful of another surge and that a vaccine won't be available to us soon enough. We might be fearful about the economy, how much damage the social restrictions are doing to it and how long those effects might last. We might be fearful about the elections, wondering what will happen in the next two and a half months, or in the next four years. We might be fearful about the state of the natural world – the drastic increase of fires and floods and major hurricanes. There is plenty to be anxious about. We don't know how these things will work out; they are beyond our control.

But there is one thing we know with certainty. Our Lord, our Sovereign, our Creator is not a harsh master, demanding perfection while doing nothing to help us. We face significant challenges; individually, we see them differently, and that will influence how we respond. But over and underneath and around all of it, we know Jesus – the human revelation of God – who is not hard and exacting, but kind and patient, loving and encouraging, capable and eager to assist us.

What we perceive to be true about God and about how God is or is not active in the world, will greatly affect how our lives unfold. Is God bringing about God's kingdom in this world, or is our fate only in the hands of the President and the Congress? Who is more real? Whose agenda will prevail?

We've just had another national election, and every four years we see this happen. Those on the winning side are elated and believe life will get much better; those who have lost are crushed, convinced our country is headed for ruin. We go through these same emotions every four years.

And it matters who is President and who serves in Congress. It matters that we take voting seriously and that we continue to make our voices heard. There are real consequences to the things the government does and the things we do. But no matter how bleak things might be, we have hope – real hope. We see, not certain doom, but great possibilities in the future, however they might come about.

We are not stuck in the arguments and the division and the legitimate differences among us – we know something greater, something beyond all that. We know God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. We know Jesus, who has been crucified, is risen, and is Lord of all. We know this world and our lives, our neighbor's lives, rest in God's hands, and God brings newness out of destruction, restored community out of raging conflict, goodness out of misery, and life – in all its forms – out of death.

Do not be afraid. Even when there is reason to fear, do not be afraid. God reigns. Jesus lives. The Holy Spirit is here, furthering God's will. Do not be afraid, and do not despair. The One who made us and who loves us is at work, bringing redemption, wholeness, and life today, even in these circumstances.

**HYMN OF THE DAY #785** *"When Peace like a River" ("It Is Well with My Soul")*

1 When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
when sorrows like sea billows roll,  
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,  
it is well, it is well with my soul.

*Refrain*

It is well (it is well)  
with my soul, (with my soul,)  
it is well, it is well with my soul.

2 Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
let this blest assurance control,  
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
and has shed his own blood for my soul. *Refrain*

3 He lives--oh, the bliss of this glorious thought;  
my sin, not in part, but the whole,  
is nailed to his cross and I bear it no more.  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! *Refrain*

4 Lord, hasten the day when our faith shall be sight,  
the clouds be rolled back as a scroll,  
the trumpet shall sound and the Lord shall descend;  
even so it is well with my soul. *Refrain*

Text: Horatio G. Spafford, 1828-1888

**APOSTLES' CREED**

With the whole Church let us confess our 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 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 OF THE PEOPLE**

Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

Lord of the church, ignite your people with the passion of your love. By the fire of your Holy Spirit, unify us across ministries, congregations, and denominations, and refine us to participate in your activity throughout the world. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of creation, we stand in awe at the works of your hands and praise you for the beauty of nature. Bless the earth for your glory and restore its integrity where exploitation has caused ruin. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of the nations, sound forth your justice in the ears of all leaders. Increase concern for those who are most vulnerable, here and around the world. Be with this nation as we look to the future, and inspire cooperation among our people and our leaders. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of all in need, search out all who cry to you in distress. Scatter the heavy clouds of depression, chronic illness, unemployment, and loneliness with your radiant presence. Send us as encouragement and signs of your healing. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of the stranger, stir up holy restlessness in us to extend love to those at the margins. Release our desire for control and open us to learn from the perspectives of others. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of the living and the dead, we give you thanks for all the saints at rest from their labors. Rouse us to live by their example, that saints yet to come may also know your love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Listen to your gathered children praying, Good Lord...

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

**THE PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**THE DOXOLOGY**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
 praise him, all creatures here below;  
 praise him above, ye heav'nly host;  
 praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Text: Thomas Ken, 1637-1711

**OFFERING PRAYER**

God of all goodness, generations have turned to you, gathered around your table, and shared your abundant blessings. Number us among them that, as we gather these gifts from your abundance, and give thanks for your rich blessings, we may feast upon your very self and care for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Servant.

**Amen.**

*(Please have the bread and wine/juice ready for Holy Communion)*

**THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

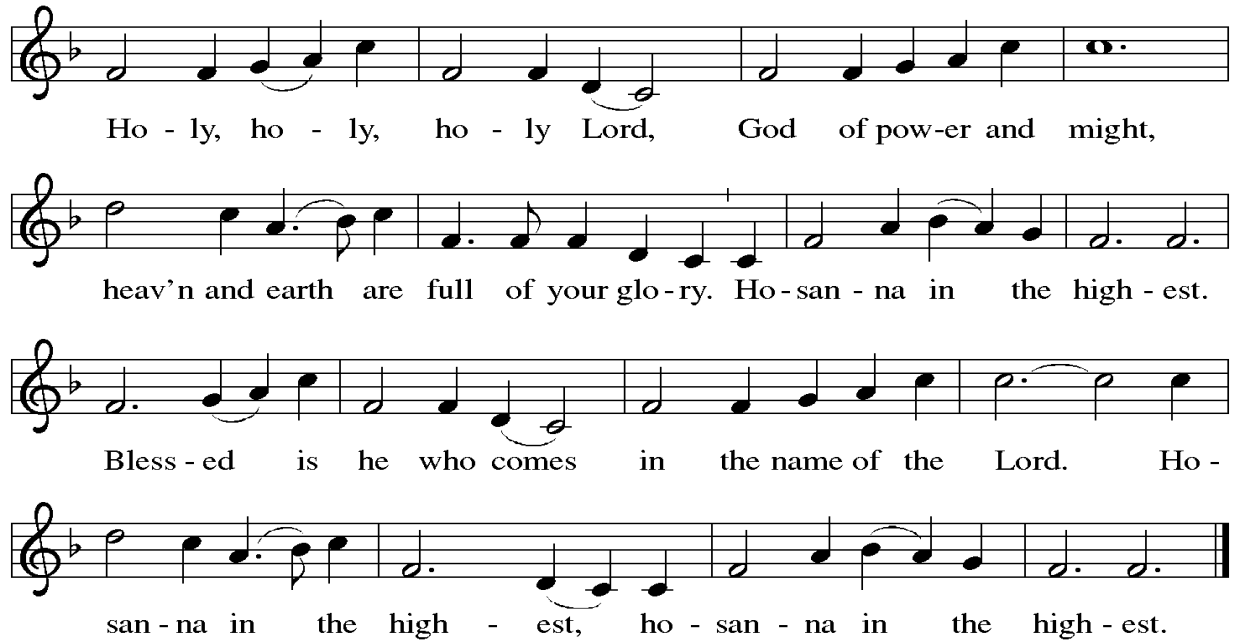
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

**PREFACE FOR SUNDAYS**

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:

## “Holy, Holy, Holy”



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,  
 heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.  
 Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -  
 san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

### **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

O God, we praise you for your mighty works throughout the ages: you brought order out of chaos to create heaven and earth; you rescued Noah and his family from the great flood; you gave your promise of everlasting faithfulness to Abraham and Sarah; you sent Moses to lead your people from slavery into freedom. You alone are God; there is no other beside you. You lead us in righteousness and truth for your name's sake. When the time was right you sent your son, Jesus, to teach us, forgive us, and show us the way of everlasting life. We remember...

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 in remembrance of me.

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

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

**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**

There is a place for you at the banquet. Come and feast at Jesus' table.

Take the bread and eat, this is the body of Christ, given for you. *(please consume the bread)*

Take the cup and drink, this is the blood of Christ, shed for you. *(please drink from the cup)*

### **BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION**

The body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**Amen.**

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Lord Jesus, in this simple meal you have set a banquet. Sustain us on the journey, strengthen us to care for the least of your beloved children, and give us glad and generous hearts as we meet you on the way.

**Amen.**

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **BLESSING**

May the God of all creation, in whose image we are made, who claims us and calls us beloved, who strengthens us for service, give you reason to rejoice and be glad! The blessing of God, Sovereign, ✠ Savior, and Spirit, be with you today and always.

**Amen.**

**CLOSING HYMN #668 “O Zion, Haste”**

1 O Zion, haste, your mission high fulfilling,  
to tell to all the world that God is light;  
that he who made all nations is not willing  
one soul should perish, lost in shades of night.

*Refrain*

Publish glad tidings, tidings of peace,  
tidings of Jesus, redemption, and release.

2 Publish to ev'ry people, tongue, and nation  
that God, in whom they live and move, is love;  
tell how he stooped to save his lost creation  
and died on earth that we might live above. *Refrain*

3 He comes again! O Zion, ere you meet him,  
make known to ev'ry heart his saving grace;  
let none whom he has ransomed fail to greet him,  
through your neglect, unfit to see his face. *Refrain*

Text: Mary A. Thomson, 1834-1923

**DISMISSAL**

Beloved of God, go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

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