

Call to Worship

P In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall come;

C and they shall seek the Lord their God.

P They shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned toward it, saying,

C "Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant which will never be forgotten."

P As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

C that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Opening Hymn

433 Glory Be to Jesus

1 Glory be to Jesus,
Who in bitter pains
Poured for me the lifeblood
From His sacred veins!

*Text: Italian, c. 18th cent.; tr. Edward Caswall, 1814–78, alt.
Text: Public domain*

2 Grace and life eternal
In that blood I find;
Blest be His compassion,
Infinitely kind!

3 Blest through endless ages
Be the precious stream
Which from endless torment
Did the world redeem!

4 Abel's blood for vengeance
Pleaded to the skies;
But the blood of Jesus
For our pardon cries.

5 Oft as earth exulting
Wafts its praise on high,
Angel hosts rejoicing
Make their glad reply.

6 Lift we, then, our voices,
Swell the mighty flood;
Louder still and louder
Praise the precious blood!

P I call to the Lord for help, I plead with him.

C I bring him all my complaints; I tell him all my troubles. When I am ready to give up, he knows what I should do.

P In the path where I walk, my enemies have hidden a trap for me.

C I look beside me and I see that there is no one to help me; there is no one to protect me; no one cares for me.

P Lord, I cry to you for help;

C You, Lord, are my protector; you are all I want in this life.

P Listen to my cry for help, because I am sunk in despair.

C Save me from my enemies, who are much stronger than I am.

P Rescue me from my trouble;

C then in the meeting of your people I will praise you, because you have been good to me.

Stand

Confession & Absolution

P If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.

P Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Kneel/Stand

C Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

P Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the  Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Sit

Distribution of the Ashes

Stand

♪ Gloria Patri

Gethsemane

Glory to the Father be,
And to Christ, eternally.
Glory to the Spirit raise.
Join all nature in her praise:
From creation's ancient shore
Unto life forevermore.

Gospel Reading

Mark 14:26–52

²⁶And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷And Jesus said to them, “**You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’** ²⁸But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”

²⁹Peter said to him, “Even though they all fall away, I will not.” ³⁰And Jesus said to him, “**Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.**” ³¹But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same.

³²And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, “**Sit here while I pray.**” ³³And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. ³⁴And he said to them, “**My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.**” ³⁵And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶And he said, “**Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.**” ³⁷And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “**Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**” ³⁸And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ³⁹And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴⁰And he came the third time and said to them, “**Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.** ⁴¹**Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.**”

⁴²And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴³Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.” ⁴⁴And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “**Rabbi!**” And he kissed him. ⁴⁵And they laid hands on him and seized him. ⁴⁶But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

⁴⁸And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.” ⁵⁰And they all left him and fled.

⁵¹And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, ⁵²but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

Sit

Theme Hymn

450 Herzlich Tut Mich

The voices of the Passion,
Those words from ancient days—
What message do they fashion
As on your cross I gaze?
In words that once were spoken,
In speech now overheard,
Grant me, O Lord, this token:
To hear your living Word!

Overheard

Malchus and Mark

Cast Of Characters

Pastor, who delivers the Sermonic Introduction and Sermonic Conclusion.

Malchus, servant of the high priest, just miraculously healed at Gethsemane.

Mark, a young man who ran away from our Lord's capture, leaving his tunic behind.

Abner, Malchus' friend, a very small part at the beginning and end of the drama.

Sermonic Introduction

P Do you believe in miracles? The Bible, of course, is full of them. Even the Passion History is interrupted by one—the healing of the ear of a man named Malchus, a servant of the high priest. What do you suppose Malchus would have said if you had asked him, "Do you believe in miracles?"

He got his miracle that night, even though he hadn't been looking for one. Others that night, who might have been hoping for miracles, didn't see what they were looking for. One young man, in fact, ran away naked in the confusion. He obviously did not find the miracle he had been looking for.

Christian tradition says that this man was Mark, the man whose name would later be ascribed to the Gospel according to St. Mark--a gospel full of miracles.

But not on that night. Not when he was looking for one. Not in the way he had hoped.

Do you suppose it is possible that Mark and Malchus ever met? That they had the opportunity to talk about what happened that night? Do you suppose it could have happened even on that very night? Probably not. But if such a conversation HAD taken place ...

That is the premise of the words you are about to overhear. But to do so you will have to use your imagination. It is late on the night of Holy Thursday. And as we draw near, Malchus and a friend (we'll call him Abner, a good biblical name) are returning to Jerusalem from the Garden of Gethsemane ...

Drama

Abner Hey, Malchus, it's been some night, hasn't it?

Malchus Yeah, Abner. I'm still not sure what really happened.

Abner Me either. Hey, I've gotta stop on the next street and pick something up. You coming?

Malchus No, I think I'll just keep going. I want some time to think.

Abner All right. I'll catch up with you then. Take your time.

Malchus Right. See you in a few minutes, Abner.

Mark (pause, then softly, whispering) Pardon me.

Malchus What?

Mark (a little louder) Pardon me. Could you ... could you help me?

Malchus (confused) Who is that? Where are you?

Mark Over here ... in the bushes.

Malchus Where? I can't see you.

Mark Over here.

Malchus It's so dark.

Mark Say, I'm afraid I have a rather embarrassing problem ...

Malchus (*startled, loudly*) Hey! You don't have any clothes on!

Mark Uh, yes. That's my problem. You see ...

Malchus (*interrupting*) You're stark naked!

Mark Can you lend me your coat?

Malchus (*still loud*) No, hold on! What is this?

Mark (*with emphasis*) Can you lend me your coat?

Malchus Are you some kind of a ...

Mark (*interrupting, impatiently*) Your coat!!! ... (*then, more softly, pleading*) Please. It's not what you think. My clothes were ... uh ... taken.

Malchus (*suddenly concerned*) Oh, were you robbed?

Mark Well, sort of. You see ...

Malchus (*quite concerned*) Oh, I'm sorry. Are you hurt? Here, put this on.

Mark Thanks. I mean really, thanks. (*pause*) Hey, don't I know you from somewhere?

Malchus No, I don't think so. I ...

Mark Were you at the Mount of Olives tonight?

Malchus Well, yes. I ...

Mark (*brightening*) Sure. I thought you looked familiar. You're the guy with the ear.

Malchus (*incredulous*) You were there? You saw what happened?

Mark (*suddenly hesitant*) Well, I ...

Malchus (pressing) Were you there?

Mark (fumbling) Well, sort of ... that is ... I ...

Malchus You were there, weren't you? You must have been.

Mark (after a pause, softly) I ran away.

Malchus (recognizing) Oh, you're the one! They told me about you. That explains about your clothes.

Mark (sheepishly) Yeah.

Malchus You weren't robbed. You escaped.

Mark (defensively) I guess you could call it that. (trying to change the subject) And you were there to take part in the capture.

Malchus Right.

Mark You're not going to turn me in, are you?

Malchus (smiling) Hey, look, man. I'm only a servant. I was there because they told me to be. I've got no gripe against you.

Mark Thank God!

Malchus (reflectively) Besides, too much has happened tonight. I've got to have some time to think.

Mark Yeah, me too.

Malchus (something is dawning) But ... if you were there tonight ...

Mark You know I was.

Malchus Right, you're wearing my coat ...

Mark (interrupting) Yeah, thanks again.

Malchus (continuing) ... maybe you can tell me what happened there.

Mark What do you mean? They *captured* him; that's what happened.

Malchus That's what I mean. Who was he?

Mark You mean you don't know?

Malchus (*almost impatient*) Look, I told you. I'm a servant. I do what I'm told. They said they wanted a large group to go to the Garden of Gethsemane; that's all I know. Told me to bring a torch and a club ... it might be dangerous.

Mark I wish someone had told me that!

Malchus It was dangerous. Some crazy guy came at me with a sword.

Mark (*acknowledging*) That was Peter.

Malchus (*surprised*) You know him?

Mark (*after a pause, realizing he's caught*) Yeah ... I know him.

Malchus (*pouncing*) You are one of them, then!

Mark (*very defensive*) Look, all I said was that I know him. (*softer*) I saw the guy hit you with the sword ... on the side of the head ...

Malchus (*urging him on*) Yes ... then what?

Mark Looked to me like he got your ear.

Malchus That's what they tell me ... That's what it felt like.

Mark You're not sure?

Malchus All I remember was this terrible pain ... I reached up and my hand was full of blood ... and it felt like my ear was gone. It really did, I could swear ... (*confused*) But then I must have blacked out.

Mark (*softly*) He healed you.

Malchus (*urgent*) Who did? That's what I want to know.

Mark (*after a pause*) I can't tell you.

Malchus (*more urgent*) You've got to tell me!

Mark (*desperate*) I can't.

Malchus (*just as desperate*) But I've got to know! (*pause, then with more control*) Look, something happened there in the garden tonight, something I don't understand ...

Mark I don't understand any of it either.

Malchus I mean, to me! I got my ear cut off, but here it is right on the side of my head where it always was ... and it works! There's *blood*, all over my coat, the coat you're wearing. I've got to know what happened!

Mark He healed you.

Malchus (*pressing*) Who did?

Mark (*softly, after a pause*) Jesus.

Malchus (*surprised*) Jesus? That was Jesus? Jesus of Nazareth? The rabbi?

Mark (*agreeing*) The rabbi.

Malchus (*confused*) Why were they out to capture him?

Mark (*just as confused*) I don't know. It was your gang that did it.

Malchus But I thought it was one of *your* people who was leading the chase.

Mark (*suddenly defensive again*) Don't call them *my* people!

Malchus (*correcting*) One of *his* people, then ... all right?

Mark Judas.

Malchus (*brightly*) Right, that's the name: Judas. But *why*?

Mark (*getting upset*) I don't know! That's what I don't understand. Look, you've got your ear. Why don't you just leave it at that? You've had your miracle.

Malchus Miracle?

Mark What else would you call it?

Malchus (trying out the idea) Miracle.

Mark (reflectively, almost to himself) Funny, that's what I was looking for too, I guess ... a miracle. I still don't believe they actually captured him ... that he didn't escape ... walk away ... run away ... let Peter keep swinging his sword ...

Malchus Ouch!

Mark (realizing) Oh, sorry about that. But I really thought he'd do something.

Malchus He healed my ear.

Mark That's not what I mean.

Malchus What do you mean?

Mark (groping) I don't know how to tell you this ... but some of us thought that he really was ... (blurts it out) the promised Messiah.

Malchus The Messiah?

Mark Yeah. Sounds crazy, doesn't it? But it didn't sound crazy if you ever heard him, if you ever saw him ... if you ever watched him do the things he did ...

Malchus Like healing ears?

Mark Yeah, like healing all kinds of things. Blind people, deaf people ... paralytics, cripples, deranged people ...

Malchus And people with ears cut off.

Mark Yeah, I guess so. (pause) We had hoped ... we had so hoped that he would really be the one ... the one to redeem Israel ... the Messiah.

Malchus You were looking for another miracle.

Mark Yeah, I guess so. The *big* one. (*pause*) Funny, isn't it? I was looking for a miracle and nothing happened. You weren't looking for a miracle, and you got one. (*pause, then changing subject*) What do you think they'll do with him?

Malchus Jesus? I don't know. There was some talk about a trial ... even tonight, if they can get everybody together.

Mark (*surprised*) Tonight?

Malchus Yeah. I even heard some talk about handing him over the Romans for crucifixion.

Mark Oh, no!

Malchus Sorry, but that's what they were saying. You asked. No more miracles, I guess.

Mark I don't understand it.

Abner (*calling, from a distance*) Ma-a-a-a-a-alchus!

Mark (*suddenly frightened*) Who's that?

Malchus They're calling me. I've got to go.

Abner (*calling, but closer*) Malchus! Are you there?

Mark Hey, you won't tell them I'm here, will you?

Malchus (*smiling*) No. You've got problems of your own.

Mark Oh, yeah. About the coat ...

Malchus Hey, keep it. You've had enough trouble for one night. Besides, it was all full of blood anyway.

Abner (*arriving, after a pause*) Hey, Malchus, you talking to somebody? Where've you been?

Malchus No ... I was just (*smiling*) getting rid of my coat.

AbnerOh, yeah. It was all full of blood, wasn't it? Hey, what really happened to you, anyway?

Malchus (not too seriously) Abner, do you believe in miracles?

Sermonic Conclusion

P We don't know whether it really happened that way, of course ... whether Mark and Malchus really met like that and held the conversation we have overheard. Probably they didn't.

But this imaginary conversation does raise some important questions ... like the question of miracles--why they don't happen when we would like them to, when we so desperately want them to. And why, when they do happen, they are so unexpected, and maybe even (to our thinking) misdirected.

It would appear that God just doesn't always do things according to our timetable ... that he does not "perform" for us, like a dog doing tricks, just because we want him to ... or even when we feel we need him to. He insists on being GOD ... and he insists on working his miracles in his own way, and at his own time.

Take Mark, for example, the man who lost his coat in the confusion of Gethsemane. If, as Christian tradition has it, that frightened runaway really was Mark (the Scriptures don't actually name him, but tradition does) ... and if that Mark is the same man who later ran away again, from St. Paul's first missionary journey as the Book of Acts records ... if that is the man who wrote the Gospel which bears the name of Mark ... then a miracle DID happen--the miracle of faith: Faith that was finally so strong and so convicted that it moved to written confession!

That was in the future, of course. At this point in the story, Mark wasn't sure what he believed any more. Life is like that sometimes, and miracles don't always occur on schedule. Along with Peter and the rest, Mark would have to see the events to their conclusion--the conclusion you and I already know from inspired documents like the book that bears the name of Mark. It is "The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." That's how Mark's book begins. It ends with the crucifixion of that Son of God for the sins of the world, and the empty tomb which attests to his resurrection.

Do YOU believe in miracles? Malchus had no choice. His ear was healed. And as for US ... well, whether this conversation actually could have been overheard or not, the miracle of the Gospel--the death and resurrection of God's Messiah for each of us--remains to be heard ("He who has ears to hear, let him hear," Jesus once said) ... and to be believed.

Like Mark, can you see yourself tonight wearing a borrowed cloak, to cover the nakedness of your sin and guilt and shame, the times you have fled from the Lord and forsaken him? Look at it closely, that borrowed robe. It has blood on it. That is why it was given to you. It is someone else's blood--a sign of healing.

A miracle!

Theme Hymn

450 Herzlich Tut Mich

Lord, when with fears I'm stricken
To drive me from your sight,
My faith, O Savior, quicken
To know your saving might.
What blessing I inherit
when standing at your side:
Your righteousness and merit
My nakedness to hide!

Offering

Stand

Prayers

P O Lord, how shall we stand before you in the nakedness of our sin, our guilt, our shame?

C How shall we stand, save robed in the righteousness of your righteous Son, our Savior, Jesus the Messiah?

P And how shall we know his righteousness made ours unless you speak to us, opening our ears and healing our hearing by the power of your sanctifying Spirit,

C that hearing, we may believe; and believing we may follow; and in following we may not be ashamed.

P Work in us, O God, the miracle of healing faith,

C faith in him whose blood was spilled to forgive us even when we fail and flee; faith in the forgiving love that returns us once again to the hard and pleasant paths of righteousness,

P in Christ our Lord, by whom we pray:

Lord's Prayer

C Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Communion

Words of Institution

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 [†] 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 [†] blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Distribution

Sit

Distribution Hymn 1

563 Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness

- 1 Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
 My beauty are, my glorious dress;
 Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
 With joy shall I lift up my head.

- 2 Bold shall I stand in that great day,
 Cleansed and redeemed, no debt to pay;
 Fully absolved through these I am
 From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

- 3 Lord, I believe Thy precious blood,
 Which at the mercy seat of God
 Pleads for the captives' liberty,
 Was also shed in love for me.

- 4 Lord, I believe, were sinners more
Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou hast for all a ransom paid,
For all a full atonement made.
- 5 When from the dust of death I rise
To claim my mansion in the skies,
This then shall be my only plea:
Jesus hath lived and died for me.
- 6 Jesus, be endless praise to Thee,
Whose boundless mercy hath for me,
For me, and all Thy hands have made,
An everlasting ransom paid.

Text: Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, 1700–60; tr. John B. Wesley, 1703–91, alt.

Text: Public domain

Distribution Hymn 2

550 Lamb of God

- 1 Your only Son, no sin to hide,
But You have sent Him from Your side
 To walk upon this guilty sod,
 And to become the Lamb of God. Refrain
- ref O Lamb of God, sweet Lamb of God,
I love the holy Lamb of God!
O wash me in His precious blood,
My Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.
- 2 Your Gift of love they crucified,
They laughed and scorned Him as He died:
 The humble King they named a fraud,
 And sacrificed the Lamb of God. Refrain
- 3 I was so lost, I should have died,
But You have brought me to Your side
 To be led by Your staff and rod,
 And to be called a lamb of God. Refrain

Text: Twila Paris, 1958

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Distribution Hymn 3

422 On My Heart Imprint Your Image

1 On my heart imprint Your image,
 Blessèd Jesus, King of grace,
 That life's riches, cares, and pleasures
 Never may Your work erase;
 Let the clear inscription be:
 Jesus, crucified for me,
 Is my life, my hope's foundation,
 And my glory and salvation!

Text: Thomas Hansen Kingo, 1634–1703; tr. Peer O. Strömme, 1856–1921, alt.

Text: Public domain

Benediction

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

C Amen.

Closing Hymn

1 What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!
 What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
 What wondrous love is this
 That caused the Lord of bliss
 To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
 To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

2 When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down,
 When I was sinking down, sinking down,
 When I was sinking down
 Beneath God's righteous frown,
 Christ laid aside His crown for my soul, for my soul,
 Christ laid aside His crown for my soul.

3 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing;
 To God and to the Lamb I will sing;
 To God and to the Lamb,
 Who is the great I AM,
 While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing,
 While millions join the theme, I will sing.

4 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on;
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on.
 And when from death I'm free,
 I'll sing His love for me,
And through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,
And through eternity I'll sing on.

Text: A General Selection of . . . Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1811, Lynchburg, alt.

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