

## Hymn of Invocation

## 425 *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*

- 1 When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss  
And pour contempt on all my pride.
- 2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
Save in the death of Christ, my God;  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.
- 3 See, from His head, His hands, His feet  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
- 4 Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a tribute far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all!

*Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748*

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## Opening Responsory

## *Jesus Christ, You are the Light of the World*

Sung by Cantors

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Cantor: Jesus Christ, you are the light of the world,  
The light no darkness can overcome.  
Stay with us now, for it is evening,  
And the day is almost over.  
Let your light scatter the darkness,  
And shine within your people

# Evening Hymn

# Joyous Light

All Sing

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1.) Joy-ous light of heav'n-ly glo - ry, lov - ing  
2.) In the stars that grace the dark - ness, in the  
3.) You who made the heav-en's splen - dor, ev - 'ry

4  
glow of God's own face, you who sing cre - a - tion's  
blaz - ing sun of dawn, in the light of peace and  
7 danc - ing star of night, make us shine with gen - tle

10  
sto - ry, shine on ev - 'ry land and race. Now as  
wis - dom, we can hear your qui - et song. Love that  
jus - tice, let us each re - flect your light. Might - y

13  
eve - ing falls a - round us, we shall raise our songs to  
fills the night with won - der, love that warms the wea - ry  
God of all cre - a - tion, gen - tle Christ who lights our

16  
you. God of day - break, God of shad - ows, come and  
soul, love that bursts all chains a - sun - der, set us  
way, lov - ing Spir - it of sal - va - tion, lead us

light our hearts a - new.  
free and make us whole.  
on to end - less day.

## Evening Thanksgiving

Sung Responsively

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Cantor: May God be with you all.

All Sing: Musical notation for the phrase "And al - so with you." It consists of a single treble clef staff with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is a simple four-note line: a half note G3, followed by quarter notes A3, B3, and C4. The lyrics "And al - so with you." are written below the staff.

Cantor: Let us sing our thanks to God.

All Sing: Musical notation for the phrase "It is right to give God thanks and praise." It consists of a single treble clef staff with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is a simple four-note line: a half note G3, followed by quarter notes A3, B3, and C4. The lyrics "It is right to give God thanks and praise." are written below the staff.

Cantor: Blessed are you, Creator of the universe,  
From old you have led your people by night and day.  
May the light of your Christ make our darkness bright,  
For your Word and your presence are the light of our pathways,  
And you are the light and life of all creation. Amen.

## Psalmody

*Psalm 115 (spoken)*

P Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory,

C for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness.

P Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?"

C Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases.

P Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands.

C They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; they make no sound in their throats.

P Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them.

C O Israel, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.

P The LORD has been mindful of us; he will bless us;

C he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron;

P he will bless those who fear the LORD,

C both small and great.

## Gloria Patri

*sung to Gethsemane 77 77 77 (Chief of Sinners)*

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.

Stand

## Reading

*Mark 15:16–39*

<sup>16</sup>And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. <sup>17</sup>And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. <sup>18</sup>And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" <sup>19</sup>And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. <sup>20</sup>And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

<sup>21</sup>And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. <sup>22</sup>And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). <sup>23</sup>And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. <sup>24</sup>And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. <sup>25</sup>And it was the third hour when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup>And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." <sup>27</sup>And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>29</sup>And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, <sup>30</sup>save yourself, and come down from the cross!" <sup>31</sup>So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. <sup>32</sup>Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

<sup>33</sup>And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>34</sup>And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" <sup>35</sup>And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." <sup>36</sup>And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." <sup>37</sup>And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>38</sup>And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup>And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

## Theme Hymn

(sung to LSB 449 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded)

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!

## Sermonic Introduction

P *Are there times in your life when it just doesn't seem fair? When it seems as though circumstances have collaborated against you to make things more difficult than they need to be?*

*And when that happens, WHY does it happen? Is it merely, as many contend, a string of bad luck? An unfortunate turn of events? Or is there a plan, a purpose, even, to those things that seem merely coincidental? And while we ponder questions like those, is there something we should be DOING--some task, some assignment, something to give meaning and direction to the events and circumstances in which we find ourselves? Or at least an ATTITUDE that might make a difference?*

*Tonight we shall overhear questions like these as they are considered by two men whose role in our Lord's crucifixion may seem to be no more than coincidental: the centurion, who began his day like so many others, but ended it with a confession that has been remembered and emulated ever since ... and Simon of Cyrene, an out-of-town visitor who was conscripted to carry our Lord's cross on the Way of Sorrows. Two men who were just going about their own business, when suddenly--and unexpectedly--they found themselves personally involved in the mission of the Lord.*

Centurion (*shouting*) Hey! Move over there! Keep your distance!

Extra Don't shove! Be careful!

(*together, overlapping*)

Simon Look out, will you?

Centurion Come on, move back! Out of the way!

Extra Careful there!

(*together*)

Simon I'm sorry. I want to get a look.

Centurion Move back! Move back!

Extra All right. All right.

(*together*)

Simon Yes, sir. I'm moving.

Centurion (*shouting*) Wait a minute--you there!

Extra I'm moving. I'm moving.

Centurion No ... YOU!

Simon (*frightened*) I didn't do anything!

Centurion You're the one, aren't you?

Simon I didn't do anything.

Centurion You're the one who carried his cross, aren't you?

Simon Well, I ...

Extra (*overlapping, in a know-it-all tattletale fashion*) Yes, he's the one, all right, centurion. I saw you order him to carry it, all right.

Centurion You *are* the one, aren't you?

Simon Yes, sir. I am ...

Centurion I thought so.

Simon (*worried*) ... but that doesn't mean I'm one of *them*. You *made* me do it, remember? I was just an innocent bystander.

Centurion (*trying to explain*) I know. I ...

Simon (*rushing on*) I don't even live here. I'm from Cyrene, in Africa, just visiting for the holidays.

Centurion O.K., O.K., I understand that. (*much more gently*) In fact, in a way I wanted to apologize.

Simon Apologize?

Centurion Yes. I think I was little rough on you back there on the road when it happened. Things were kind of confused right then ... getting out of hand ... and you just happened to be standing there ...

Simon (*almost under his breath*) Lucky me.

Centurion Look, I didn't mean it that way. Somebody had to do it.

Simon And I just happened to be standing there ...

Centurion Look, I said I'm sorry. I was just doing my job. (*pause; then more softly, reflectively*) He kept falling down, you know. He was awfully weak.

Simon It looked as though he had been beaten pretty badly ...

Centurion Yes, he had.

Simon With one of your famous Roman floggings?

Centurion (*matter-of-factly*) That's what it was. The governor had ordered it. It's often standard procedure in these execution cases.

Simon And you ... how did you put it? You were just "doing your job"?

Centurion (*becoming a little upset*) Look, that's the way it is. When the governor orders floggings, then right ... it *is* part of my job.

Simon And did the governor order the crown of thorns, too? (*long pause*) Just doing your job, right?

Centurion Look, whether you happen to like Roman troops or not, this peace-keeping business isn't easy. Times have been turbulent. There's been insurrection in the wind, armed resistance here and there. The men were kinda jumpy, you know? Gotta let them break the tension somewhere.

Simon So you get your kicks beating up condemned criminals?

Centurion (*quite upset*) Look, it's my job!

Simon Come on! That's no more your job than *my* job was to carry his cross down the street like a common crook.

Centurion Now wait a minute. That *was* your job. It became your job the minute I said so.

Simon (*sarcastically*) Oh, that's the way it is, is it?

Centurion (*with punch*) Yes, that's the way it is! (*then softer, to end the arguing*) Hey, I said I was sorry.

Simon Well, it was demeaning, embarrassing. It made me look like I was *guilty* of something.

Centurion (*after a pause, thoughtfully*) If you think *you're* embarrassed, how do you suppose *he* feels?

Simon What do you mean?

Centurion Have you seen the sign over his head?

Simon (*reading*) "The King of the Jews." What is that supposed to mean?

Centurion I've been wondering whether he was kind of an "innocent bystander" too ... sort of caught in this thing ... the way you were back there on the road. It's as though somebody needed a scapegoat for something or other, and this poor fellow just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Simon I don't understand. Are you saying he's *innocent*?

Centurion At least innocent. Maybe more.

Simon More?

Centurion Have you been watching him? He's not dying the way most of them do, cursing and screaming and fighting ... or even protesting his innocence.

Simon I wouldn't know; I'm not in the habit of watching crucifixions.

Centurion (*goes right on, reflectively*) Praying, yes. A lot of them pray. But this one was different. He prayed that we should be forgiven for what we're doing ... not punished, but forgiven.

Simon (*almost under his breath*) The way I'm supposed to forgive you for making me carry his cross, I suppose.

Centurion He prayed for us even while we were dividing up his belongings, and casting lots to see who would get lucky and inherit his robe.

Simon The way I got lucky and inherited his cross.

Centurion Huh? Oh, I suppose you could put it that way.

Simon In other words, it's all blind fate, then ... the luck of the toss.

Centurion I guess I've always felt that way. About life, I mean ... fate ... everything. It's just a coincidence that you were standing there on the street when I needed someone to carry his cross, right? And it's just a coincidence that today it's my turn to draw crucifixion detail. And it's just a coincidence that today is the day it's that man's turn to die, right? Innocent or guilty doesn't matter; it's all fate ... like throwing dice or casting lots: Your turn comes and that's the way it is; sometimes good, sometimes not so good. (*pause*) But now I'm not so sure.

Simon How's that?

Centurion I don't know exactly; but I've been watching him die for a long time now, the "King of the Jews" ... and somehow I get the feeling that this one is not just dying by accident. It's almost as if ... well, as if he were doing *his* job.

Simon What do you mean, "doing *his* job"? What is his job, *dying*?

Centurion I don't know; that's what's so strange about it all. We offered him drugged wine at the beginning, the way we always do ...

Simon (*muttering*) Part of your job.

Centurion (*going on anyway*) ... but he refused. Almost as if he *wanted* to feel the pain ... to be alert, aware. Almost as if this whole thing were ... I don't exactly know how to put it ... his *duty*, almost like a sacred obligation. Yes, if you want to put it that way: As if he were "doing his job."

Simon (*changing the mood a bit*) What was his job, anyway? Do you know?

Centurion They say his trade was carpenter.

Simon (*with a laugh*) Oh, come on; this is too much.

Centurion What do you mean?

Simon Don't you see the irony? He's a carpenter ... and he ends up nailed to a piece of wood. Now *that* is a weird coincidence!

Centurion (*not willing to laugh along*) They say he was also one of those religious teachers.

Simon A rabbi?

Centurion Right. A very popular one, from what I understand. Not one of your fanatic rabble-rousers, but more a healer, a reconciler.

Simon Now that would be some job description!

Centurion And some say he was even more than that.

Simon Like what?

Centurion (*after a long pause*) The Son of God.

Simon (*after another long pause, recovering*) Naw, why would a Son of God be dying on a cross? That doesn't make any sense. If he *is* really innocent, as you seem to think, don't you suppose it's like what happened to me on the road today? An innocent bystander ... at the wrong place, at the wrong time?

Centurion Maybe so, *if* that's all it really is ... luck ... fate ... coincidence.

Simon If he were really the Son of God, don't you think he'd have come down from the cross or something ... something Godlike?

Centurion I suppose so ... unless ...

Simon Unless what?

Centurion Unless there is more going on here than we can imagine.

Simon Like what?

Centurion Like ... his job is dying ... and he's doing it.

## Sermonic Conclusion

P Yes, he WAS doing his job, to be sure. I don't suppose we usually call it by that word. More likely we speak of our Lord's "mission," I imagine. Somehow the word "mission" sounds a bit more dignified, a bit more sanctified, a bit more Godlike than "job."

*But, by whatever name we call it, in a way Simon and the centurion were quite correct. He WAS "doing his job"--and his job, at least right now, WAS ... dying! He had come into the world for this hour, Christ had said. By his dying, sin would be forgiven, the world redeemed, eternal life assured for all, and the heavenly Father glorified. Jesus may indeed have been "innocent," but he was not a "bystander"; he was actively carrying out the mission for which he had come. He was "doing his job."*

*The way he did his job at Calvary may make a difference in the way we now do ours. It is so easy to look upon the things we do day by day simply as "a job"--without seeing our very lives as a MISSION, a mission from the Lord, a mission FOR the Lord.*

*It is not by accident that we are here, not by coincidence or blind fate. Even when the tasks are difficult and distasteful--also when they are mundane and routine--God calls us to be doing our job--in HIS service.*

*Our job? Jesus once described it in Simon of Cyrene terms, didn't he? To take up the cross and follow him.*

## Theme Hymn

(sung to LSB 449 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded)

When days are long and dreary  
With dull and dread routine,  
Lord, let me not grow weary,  
But let my faith be seen.  
Help me my cross to carry,  
To labor faithfully;  
And show me, when I tarry,  
The cross you bore for me.

## Offering

Stand

## Prayers

P What will you have us do, O Lord? What will YOU have us do?

C Too long and too often we have flaunted our own wills, pursued our own desires, desired our own pursuits, and said, "Not thy will, but mine, O Lord, be done."

P Yes, even as we prayed (or failed to) and went our own rebellious way,

C Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, took up the cross, according to your will--the cross of our rebellion and our sin--and went the way of death in our behalf.

P What will you have US do, O Lord? What now is your will for us for whom your Son obeyed your will and died?

C What crosses shall we carry as we follow him? What tasks shall we perform? What mission, what assignment, what JOB awaits for us to shoulder and endure?

P Give us the strength, O God, to bear whatever cross your love bestows.

C And give us, too, the will to bear our crosses willingly; in freedom, joy, and firm resolve to say (and mean it when we do), "Not my will, but THINE, O Lord, be done"--be DONE ... not merely talked about, but DONE.

P through Christ our Lord, through whom we dare to pray:

## Lord's Prayer

**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.**

## Final Blessing

Sung Responsively

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Cantor: Let us bless our God:  
Praise and thanks to you.  
May God, Creator, bless us and keep us,  
May Christ be ever light for our lives,  
May the Spirit of Love be our guide and path for all of our days.



## Closing Hymn

427 *In the Cross of Christ I Glory*

- 1 In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time.  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime.
- 2 When the woes of life o'ertake me,  
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,  
Never shall the cross forsake me;  
Lo, it glows with peace and joy.
- 3 When the sun of bliss is beaming  
Light and love upon my way,  
From the cross the radiance streaming  
Adds more luster to the day.
- 4 Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure  
By the cross are sanctified;  
Peace is there that knows no measure,  
Joys that through all time abide.

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