

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023



Ash Wednesday - 2/22/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

What do you really need right now? To answer that question, one must first define what a “need” is. We understand that a “need” is greater than a “want.” If you lack something you want, life goes on just fine. If you lack something you need, that presents a problem. Thus, to correctly answer that question, “What do you really need right now,” ultimately one must understand their greatest problems.

Mankind’s greatest problems are universal. We all live under the curse of sin. That sin makes us utterly helpless in our natural state. Natural man is confused, unable to make sense of life. Left in sin, man is doomed to death, and not just physical death. After one’s heart stops comes another type of death that is infinitely worse, an eternal nightmare.

Lent is the season of the Church Year where we wrestle with our greatest needs. Lent also demonstrates that in Christ, all our greatest needs are met. Here is what the Spirit makes clear this season. If you lack Christ, you have nothing. If you have Christ, you have everything you truly need.

Our worship in Lent will follow this pattern:

Ash Wednesday – A Wholly Humbled Heart

First Sunday in Lent – A Champion for the Defeated

Second Sunday in Lent – A Gift for the World

Third Sunday in Lent – Water for the Thirsty

Fourth Sunday in Lent – Sight for the Blind

Fifth Sunday in Lent – Life for the Dead

The Sunday of the Passion – A Greater Type of King

Holy Thursday – Blessed Communion

Good Friday – The Perfect Sacrifice

Holy Saturday / The Great Easter Vigil – Sabbath Rest

THEME OF THE DAY

A WHOLLY HUMBLed HEART

To understand our greatest needs, we need to understand our greatest problems. So, here is the irony. One of our greatest problems is we do not think we have many problems at all. This can be especially true of those who are religious. We look to our religious activity—our regular time in prayer, our generous offerings, our volunteerism—as proof that we are just fine, certainly better than most. This belief is reinforced when others notice all the good we do and praise us for it.

Ash Wednesday is the antidote to pride. If we are so good, then why are we slowly turning back into dirt? Ash Wednesday teaches the sobering truth that one day soon, people won’t see the best version of ourselves, but the dead one. “Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.” That Ash Wednesday refrain echoes the funeral rite that will one day be spoken over us all: ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

On this first day of Lent, God intends to give us what we badly need—a wholly humbled heart that looks to Christ in contrition and true repentance. Such a heart will produce piety without any of the posing and pomp that pride tries to inject.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 59:12-20 – True humility comes from understanding the multitude of our offenses. True faith looks to the Redeemer who will come to the penitent.

SECOND READING

***2 Corinthians 7:8-13a – St. Paul teaches the blessing of godly sorrow that flows from a wholly humbled heart.

GOSPEL

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21 – Jesus warns that pious looking actions done in hope of being praised by others will not receive commendation from the Heavenly Father. True piety is born of humility.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

The Service - with Evening Hymn Tunes may be used.
That setting is in Service Builder. Ash Wed Confessional Rite may be inserted.

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

393 - Savior, When in Dust to You

or

657 - Baptismal Waters Cover Me

Psalm of the Day:

Psalm 51A

or B or C depending on musical forces

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:

650 - From Depths of Woe, Lord God, I Cry

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

*Psalm 51D

Closing Hymn:

823:1,2,5 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

or

615 - Jesus, Thank You

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

652 - Lord, Have Mercy

615 - Jesus, Thank You

Notes for the conservative service:

652 - if not used enough in the past to be familiar, a soloist should introduce and alternate

Notes for the ambitious service:

615, if selected, should likely have someone to sing the verses.

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First Sunday in Lent - 2/26/2023

SERIES THEME

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THEME OF THE DAY

A CHAMPION FOR THE DEFEATED

Our modern English word “champion” comes from an old English word that meant “warrior.” In ancient times, when two armies gathered to fight, sometimes as a prelude to the battle—and sometimes in place of the battle—each army would pick a mighty soldier, and these two men would fight each other. These elite warriors, these champions, would represent their people in battle. They would meet in the middle of the field. With everyone watching, they would fight to the death.

Today we are reminded of an ancient war that began in Eden. The perfect peace and prosperity of Paradise was lost when a fallen angel convinced mankind to follow the demons in rebelling against their Creator. When Adam fell, he condemned the world to darkness and death. The enemy of God claimed that the children of men now belonged to him. God was having none of it. He promised he would send forth his champion, his Son. And so, today we see a battle of champions. The demons send forth their strongest warrior—Satan. God sends forth the best of men, Jesus Christ. Jesus does what Adam and we could not. In crushing the devil, Jesus meets one of our greatest needs.

FIRST READING

Genesis 3:1-15 – God promised to send a champion who would do what we could not, defeating our greatest enemy.

SECOND READING

Romans 5:12-19 – Adam’s defeat meant death for all. Christ’s victory brings life for all.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 4:1-11 – The champion of the demons and the champion of mankind do battle. Jesus Christ wins.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Setting 2 without the Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

556 - All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall

Psalm of the Day:

46A

or

46C or 46E if cantors are available

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses; we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Setting 2

or

Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:

863/864 - A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

*574 - The Tree of Life

Closing Hymn:

842 - Jesus Still Lead On

or

829 - Take Heart

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

829 - Take Heart

Notes for the conservative service:

Though choosing Setting 2 without the Gloria means that none of its main canticles will be used on non-communion Sundays, it is selected for a string of five Sundays in Lent.

Notes for the ambitious service:

829 - Take Heart would require one stanza intro by soloist or choir

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Second Sunday in Lent - 3/5/2023

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THEME OF THE DAY

A GIFT FOR THE WORLD

When assessing the seriousness of need, one factor is how widespread that need is. A homeless individual needs food. During a famine, an entire nation needs food. It is substantially easier to meet the needs of the former than the latter! The more widespread a need, the greater the need.

When Jesus said, “*No one* can enter the kingdom of God,” he declared that the need for salvation is universal. He rightly condemned humanity as a whole. There is no one on the face of the earth who can make the case that they deserve God’s blessing. Yet, ages ago, God declared that all nations would be blessed. God has declared his love for the world and promised he would save the world. God’s gift of salvation is meant for all people.

Some interpret this to mean that all people will be saved in the end. This is not true. The gift of salvation is meant for the world; however, it is received by faith. “Whoever believes in him...” the Gospel says. However, the good news is that faith is also God’s gift, imparted through that gospel.

FIRST READING

Genesis 12:1-8 – The LORD promised Abram that one of his descendants would be a gift for the world. The LORD also gave Abram the gift of faith to believe that promise.

SECOND READING

Romans 4:1-5,13-17 – Abraham provides an example of how salvation is not earned but received as a gift through faith.

GOSPEL

***John 3:1-17 – By sharing the gospel of God’s love for the world, Jesus gave the gift of faith to a Pharisee named Nicodemus.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Setting 2 without the Gloria (non-communion ending)

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

613 - The God of Abraham Praise

Psalm of the Day:

121A

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Setting 2

or

Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:

570 - God Loved the World So That He Gave

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

523 - How Deep the Father's Love for Us

Closing Hymn:

627 - To God be the Glory*

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

877:1-4 - Reformation Song

684 - Father Welcomes

Note that both of these would be new and 523 at the 3rd hymn spot is also new, so maybe go with 523 and 627

Notes for the conservative service:

*If 627 is used, presiding minister may want to point out the word order change in st. 1 that is different than CW 93—so loved he the world. This word order change was to align with all other hymnals. CW93's change was unique to CW93. Some may not want to pick 627 during Lent if the "Praise the Lord" refrain is to alleluia-ish.

Notes for the ambitious service:

877:1-4 - Closing Hymn if desired for second reading

684 - if desired for Gospel

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Third Sunday in Lent - 3/12/2023

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THEME OF THE DAY

WATER FOR THE THIRSTY

A person can survive between one and two months without food. But a person can survive only two to three days without water. Water is one of our greatest needs. Research shows that even slight dehydration will adversely affect your mood, memory, and motor coordination. Become seriously dehydrated, and life ends quickly. This helps us understand what Scripture means when it says things like, “My soul thirsts for God” (Psalm 42:2). If one is separated from God, he is adversely affected. If he remains separated from God, he will die an agonizing eternal death.

Not all admit it; yet it remains true for all. Everyone has a deep spiritual thirst. In our heart of hearts, we all long for everlasting life. Unbelievers try to satisfy that deep thirst with worldly things, a strategy doomed for failure. Believers look to the One who has promised, “Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.” Jesus meets our greatest needs. He alone possesses the water that satisfies those who are spiritually parched. He alone grants eternal life.

FIRST READING

Exodus 17:1-7 – The children of Israel wanted to stone Moses because they were thirsty. So God, in his grace, gave this underserving people water from a stone.

SECOND READING

***Romans 5:1-8 – We were like people dying of thirst who were powerless to help themselves. But God’s love has been poured out into our hearts like living water.

GOSPEL

John 4:5-26 – Jesus calls a Samaritan woman to faith, providing living water for her thirsty soul.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Setting 2 without the Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

526 - What Wondrous Love Is This

or

913 - Come Away from Rush and Hurry

Psalm of the Day:

95A

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst."

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Setting 2

or

Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:

703 - I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

*677 - The Death of Jesus Christ, Our Lord

Closing Hymn:

533:1,4 - Jesus, Lover of My Soul

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

913 - Come Away from Rush and Hurry

532 - As the Deer Runs to the River

Notes for the conservative service:

913 fits the service theme well but should be introduced if selected.

Notes for the ambitious service:

532 is perhaps intermediate difficulty as far as the new tune and should definitely have cantor help, but it certainly covers the first reading and the gospel. Planners can decide if it fits with the Romans reading suggested as the sermon text. Certainly fits if preacher picks a different reading.

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Fourth Sunday in Lent - 3/19/2023

SERIES THEME

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THEME OF THE DAY

SIGHT FOR THE BLIND

We know that unbelief will have consequences in the future—eternal separation from God. But unbelief also has consequences now. It makes you blind, in a sense. The unbeliever is unable to see the world as it really is. That which is harmful the unbeliever considers good; that which is good he considers meaningless. The unbeliever cannot see the danger that lurks behind temptation. He cannot see the blessing contained in God’s Word. The unbeliever cannot see the tragic fate that lies in his future, and he certainly cannot see the Savior.

The Old Testament said that restoration of sight to the blind was one of the works of the Messiah. In his ministry, Jesus healed those who were physically blind. But even if our eyes work just fine, we still need Jesus to give us spiritual vision. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” Christ comes to shine his light into our darkened eyes that we might see him and live. Jesus meets our greatest needs. He provides sight for the spiritually blind.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 42:14-21 – God promises to lead the blind to safety and turn their darkness to light.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 5:8-14 – Those who have seen the light of Christ strive to leave deeds of darkness behind.

GOSPEL

***John 9:1-7,13-17,34-39 – Jesus miraculously enables a man who had been born blind to see the Christ both physically and spiritually.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Setting 2 without the Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

576 - Amazing Grace

Psalm of the Day:

27C

or

Hymn 825

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Setting 2

or

Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:

515 - Christ Is the World's Light

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

713 - I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

Closing Hymn:

517:1,3 - Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

515 may have been first used in January. May still benefit from a cantor or choir helping.

Notes for the ambitious service:

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Fifth Sunday in Lent - 3/26/2023

SERIES THEME

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THEME OF THE DAY

LIFE FOR THE DEAD

The author and poet George Eliot once wrote, “Our dead are never dead to us, until we have forgotten them.” The Roman philosopher Cicero said much the same. He wrote, “The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living.” What second rate comfort! But that is the best the unbelieving world can offer—the sappy sentiment that our dead loved ones somehow “live on” in our memories. It is a sad way to attempt to cope as you walk through the cemetery.

Jesus provides a better solution to death. He promises life. One day Jesus will give your faithful dead back to you—to love and to laugh and to hug and to dance. Body and soul, living and walking in the new heaven and the new earth. How do we know Jesus can and will keep that promise? Because the Son of God descended into the darkness of death himself and emerged on Easter Sunday as the first fruit of the resurrection of all God’s people. In the creed we confess, “I believe in the resurrection of the body.” Yet again, Jesus satisfies our greatest needs.

FIRST READING

***2 Kings 4:17-37 – God wants us to know that whoever believes in him will live, even though he dies. He enables the prophet Elisha to prove that to a grieving mother.

SECOND READING

Romans 8:11-19 – The Father promises to raise his children from the dead and make them heirs of everlasting glory.

GOSPEL

John 11:17-27,38-45 – A corpse responds to the empowering command of Christ. This greatest miracle of his ministry proves that Jesus is the Lord of life.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Setting 2 without the Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

846 - I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name

Psalm of the Day:

130A

130C and 130G may become popular choices but attention would need to be given to overall length of service on a communion Sunday

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Setting 2

or

Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:

571 - O God O Lord of Heaven and Earth*

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

*836 - I Walk in Danger All the Way

Closing Hymn:

502 - Children of the Heavenly Father

or

544 - I Am the Bread of Life

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

544 - I Am the Bread of Life

Notes for the conservative service:

571 was selected last year in the Year C planner and is the appointed hymn of the day but may still benefit from introduction; *perhaps consider substituting another hymn for it (723) only if introducing I Am the Bread of Life, or in consideration of service length on this communion Sunday

Notes for the ambitious service:

While the first reading is the suggested sermon text, 544 covers the gospel reading; use cantors for the verses of this new hymn. With the Gospel reading from John 11, this would be a good Sunday to introduce 544, since otherwise the Bread of Life John Gospels won't come along till Year B

Worship Plan - Church Year A

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Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion - 4/2/2023

SERIES THEME

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THEME OF THE DAY

A GREATER TYPE OF KING

Pick any head of state: the president, a prime minister, a king. Hopefully, they care about the people over whom they have authority. But even if they care, they live and operate above the people. The British royals live in a palace, not a three-bedroom ranch. The President does not fly coach. He sits in a recliner on Air Force One. There’s nothing wrong with this. Those offices are worthy of high respect. The point is these rulers live and operate above us. If a thief is breaking into your home, call 911 and see if your governor shows up. Your governor doesn’t even know your name! But, cut him some slack. He is only human.

Jesus is not. Jesus is the King of kings, God and man in one person. He knows you intimately. More! He is willing to do absolutely anything necessary to serve and protect you. We see that this Holy Week. It begins with Jesus riding a donkey colt into Jerusalem—as the prophet foretold. As this week nears its end, Jesus is given a crown of thorns. He carries a cross out of Jerusalem and is nailed to it. Placed on his cross was this sign: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” The sign was partially right. Jesus is a king, just not of the Jews. He’s our King, infinitely mightier than any ruler in history, while also being infinitely humbler. King Jesus has come to save us. Those other heads of state can serve as blessings. But this is the greater type of king that we need most.

NOTE: The theme for this day—A Greater Type of King—can be utilized in two ways: as the theme for a Palm Sunday service or as the theme for the Sunday of the Passion. The promotional text works either way, drawing the connection between Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem as the Savior King that Zechariah had promised, and the “King of the Jews” sign placed atop the cross.

If the congregation chooses to observe Palm Sunday with three readings, introductions for three readings are provided.

However, the CW lectionary provides another option. It has reintroduced the 500-year-old practice of appointing the Triumphal Entry as the Gospel reading for Advent 1. Why does that reading serve well there? Because Palm Sunday serves as a microcosm of the salvation story that unfolds during the festival half of the Church Year. We see the King of kings humbling himself and willingly riding to his death. All else—the angelic choir of Christmas Eve, the voice of the Father thundering at Christ’s baptism, the signs and wonders, Christ’s bold preaching, his transfiguration—leads to this week. Reading the Palm Sunday account on Advent 1 reminds us where the path of the Church Year ends. This is why so many Advent hymns contain Palm Sunday references.

This subsequently allows for the focus of the sixth week of Lent to be broadened: the Sunday of the Passion. The portions of the Gospels that tell of Jesus' suffering and death are typically read during midweek Lenten services. But if many in your congregation do not attend those, it is possible they never hear about the passion story in its entirety. The Sunday of the Passion places the entire passion story in front of God's people in one service.

Watch for a Year A Sunday of the Passion service folder to be released no later than January 20, 2023.

FIRST READING

Zechariah 9:9,10 – The prophet Zechariah foretold of a Savior King who would rule with gentleness and bring peace to the ends of the earth.

SECOND READING

Philippians 2:5-11 – There is none greater than King Jesus. Yet there is none humbler than King Jesus.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 21:1-11 – Look at how King Jesus humbly enters the royal city of Jerusalem. He comes in the name of the Lord to save us.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

[This service](#) can be imported into Service Builder. Apart from that, this Planner does not provide hymn suggestions. Service Builder can also insert the Palm Sunday Procession with Palms at the front end of Sunday of the Passion.

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

Psalm of the Day:

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Hymn of the Day:

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

Closing Hymn:

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

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Holy Thursday - 4/6/2023

SERIES THEME

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THEME OF THE DAY

BLESSED COMMUNION

We often think of the word communion as a synonym for the Lord’s Supper. “I took communion” means “I received the Lord’s Supper.” Yet, the Latin word *communio* means “community” or “association” or “sharing.” (In the creed, we speak of “the communion of saints.”) When people come together and share their lives with one another, the result is blessing—a blessed communion. And when God comes to us and shares himself with us, the result is eternal life.

But is that really possible? How can a holy God associate with people who sin every day? In a miraculous meal, God lets us share in his own flesh and blood, the very blood that was shed to atone for our sin. We celebrate this feast for the forgiveness of sins and restored unity with our Father—a blessed communion with God. But there’s more! As we share this meal together, the Lord who loved us unites us in love for one another—a blessed communion with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Community is often celebrated with food. When people love one another, they enjoy gathering around the dinner table. On this Holy Thursday, Jesus invites us to his table. He serves us Supper. He serves us himself. And in doing so, Jesus creates a blessed communion.

FIRST READING

Exodus 24:1-11 – Israel had promised to obey God’s Law. They did not. So how were these lawbreakers able to commune with a holy God? They were sprinkled with the blood of the covenant.

SECOND READING

***1 Corinthians 11:23-28 – St. Paul maintains that every time we celebrate the sacrament we feast on the flesh and blood of God for the forgiveness of sins and restored unity with our Father.

GOSPEL

John 13:1-15,34 – Just as Christ loved us with service and sacrifice, so he commands us to love one another as part of a blessed communion.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

options: The Service (with hymn tune canticles for evening)
Setting 2 or 3
all without Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

417 - It Was a Dark and Dismal Night

or

416 - When You Woke That Thursday Morning

Psalm of the Day:

116A

may be familiar from CW:Supplement

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Lenten Acclamation with Seasonal Verse from Setting 2 (as in hymnal)

or

Additional Settings - Set 1 (with proper verse, as in Service Builder)

Hymn of the Day:

659 - Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior

or

665 - What Is This Bread (connection with sermon text which is the Verba)

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

*671 - Your Body Given for Me, O Savior

and/or

*674 - The Infant Priest Was Holy Born

Closing Hymn:

673 - O Lord, We Praise You

or a favorite evening hymn if deemed appropriate

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

669 - In This Holy Blest Communion

671 - Your Body Given for Me, O Savior

Notes for the conservative service:

417 has been retuned but tune is very familiar; appointed Hymn of the Day with 8 sts could be moved to Distr Hymn if desired.

416 is a CWS text retuned to JOYOUS LIGHT which may be familiar and is an easy tune

Notes for the ambitious service:

If used, 669 with unknown tune would perhaps best be sung by cantor/choir in its entirety during distribution

671 is the last five stanzas of 670 with a different tune that was in CW93

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023



Good Friday - 4/7/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

What do you really need right now? To answer that question, one must first define what a “need” is. We understand that a “need” is greater than a “want.” If you lack something you want, life goes on just fine. If you lack something you need, that presents a problem. Thus, to correctly answer that question, “What do you really need right now,” ultimately one must understand their greatest problems.

Mankind’s greatest problems are universal. We all live under the curse of sin. That sin makes us utterly helpless in our natural state. Natural man is confused, unable to make sense of life. Left in sin, man is doomed to death, and not just physical death. After one’s heart stops comes another type of death that is infinitely worse, an eternal nightmare.

Lent is the season of the Church Year where we wrestle with our greatest needs. Lent also demonstrates that in Christ, all our greatest needs are met. Here is what the Spirit makes clear this season. If you lack Christ, you have nothing. If you have Christ, you have everything you truly need.

THEME OF THE DAY

THE PERFECT SACRIFICE

The Old Testament sacrificial system demonstrated both God’s holiness and his mercy. God is holy. So when there was sin, there had to be punishment. Blood had to be shed. But God is merciful. So it wasn’t the sinner’s blood, but the blood of a substitutionary sacrifice. Throughout the Old Testament almost every time God describes the type of sacrifices he would accept, he includes the phrase “without defect or blemish.” Sacrificial animals could not be sickly or deformed but were to be ideal specimens in the prime of their life. This was to illustrate an important truth of our salvation. Only someone who is perfectly sinless can save a sinner. A mother cannot pay for her daughter’s sin, for that mother is not “without defect or blemish.” That mother has sin of her own. Salvation requires a perfect savior.

Though Jesus faced endless temptation, “He did not sin.” Jesus was the first and only human being who lived a perfect life. Therefore, he is the only person who didn’t deserve to die. Yet, today Jesus dies on a cross. “He was pierced for our transgressions,” Scripture says. Note the singular “he” and the plural “our.” If Jesus were just a perfect man, his sacrifice would only have been enough to pay for the sins of one sinful man. But Jesus is more than a perfect man. He is the perfect Son of God. That is divine blood pooling at the foot of the cross. That makes his death valuable enough to pay for the sins of the entire world. Jesus looked at a world full of sinners. He saw that we needed mercy. He fulfilled our greatest need by becoming the perfect sacrifice.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 – Christ suffered and died for only one reason. He dared to pick up our transgressions and carry our iniquities.

SECOND READING

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9 – Jesus is the perfect priest who offered up the perfect sacrifice so that we might now approach God’s throne with confidence.

GOSPEL

***John 19:17-30 – Even as he is being tortured to death, Jesus shows perfect love for his mother by providing for her future and perfect love for us by fulfilling all the Scriptures.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

local choice

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

423 - The Power of the Cross

Psalm of the Day:

22A

or

22B if cantor/choir sings verses

or

22D

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Lenten Acclamation with Seasonal Verse from Setting 2 (as in hymnal)

or

Additional Settings - Set 1 (with proper verse, as in Service Builder)

Hymn of the Day:

422 - A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

434 - Upon the Cross Extended

Closing Hymn:

405 - On My Heart Imprint Your Image

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

423 - The Power of the Cross

615 - Jesus, Thank You

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

615, if selected, should likely have someone to sing the verses, but note that 423 is also newish.

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023



Vigil of Easter - 4/8/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

What do you really need right now? To answer that question, one must first define what a “need” is. We understand that a “need” is greater than a “want.” If you lack something you want, life goes on just fine. If you lack something you need, that presents a problem. Thus, to correctly answer that question, “What do you really need right now,” ultimately one must understand their greatest problems.

Mankind’s greatest problems are universal. We all live under the curse of sin. That sin makes us utterly helpless in our natural state. Natural man is confused, unable to make sense of life. Left in sin, man is doomed to death, and not just physical death. After one’s heart stops comes another type of death that is infinitely worse, an eternal nightmare.

Lent is the season of the Church Year where we wrestle with our greatest needs. Lent also demonstrates that in Christ, all our greatest needs are met. Here is what the Spirit makes clear this season. If you lack Christ, you have nothing. If you have Christ, you have everything you truly need.

THEME OF THE DAY

SABBATH REST

When God handed down the Law through Moses, he declared that no work was to be done on the seventh day of the week. Saturday was to be a day of sabbath (Hebrew for “rest”). God knew that humans need periods of physical and mental rest. But our greater need is for spiritual rest. We need to pause other activity and listen to the gospel. We need to stop thinking about our work and instead think of the work Christ has done for us, work that makes it possible for us to have a loving relationship with our holy God in spite of our daily sins. This need is so great that God commanded us to keep the Sabbath Day holy, to let nothing interfere with our pursuit of that spiritual sabbath rest.

In the early church, the Saturday of Holy Week was called the “Great Sabbath.” That day was used for meditation, fasting, and reflection in preparation for Easter. Since the days of Constantine (300AD), believers would gather on holy Saturday evening in vigil. A vigil is defined as “the act of keeping awake at times when sleep is customary.” So, the great Easter Vigil acknowledges that we need spiritual rest infinitely more than physical rest. Tonight, we gather to bask in the warming light of God’s love, to hear the story of salvation told in the Scriptures, to remember the cleansing we received in Baptism, and to celebrate the feast Christ instituted on Holy Thursday. By these means, Christ drives away all our fears. He assures us of his presence and his love. Thus, he meets one of our greatest needs—the need for sabbath rest.

NOTE: This worship series obviously can be utilized without having an Easter Vigil. This theme and explanatory text is offered for congregations that wish to hold the Vigil.

While it is called the Easter Vigil, it would not be part of the upcoming Easter worship series. Traditionally, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Vigil comprised the Triduum, the final “three days” of the forty days of Lent; hence, their connection to the Lenten worship series.

You can find a fuller explanation of the Easter Vigil in the Commentary on the Propers for Year A. A customizable order for the Easter Vigil can be found in Christian Worship: Service Builder. See also <https://worship.welsrc.net/download-worship/service-folders-triduum>. Note that the service historically does not include a sermon. Instead, it includes:

- *The Service of Light – This is a type of gathering rite that utilizes the new paschal candle. Printed explanations in the worship folder can help people understand the significance and symbolism of that special candle.*
- *The Service of Readings – This is a series of Scripture readings, typically followed by a canticle or hymn.*
- *The Service of Baptism – This portion provides opportunity for remembrance and renewal of baptism. It can serve as a time of Christian initiation (i.e. adult or youth confirmation).*
- *The Service of Holy Communion – The Lord’s Supper is celebrated.*

FIRST READING

See sample services mentioned at left under Series Theme.

SECOND READING

GOSPEL

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

Psalm of the Day:

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Hymn of the Day:

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

Closing Hymn:

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service: