

### Lamentations 3:1-6, 19-24

<sup>1</sup>I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of the Lord's wrath. <sup>2</sup>He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; <sup>3</sup>indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. <sup>4</sup>He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. <sup>5</sup>He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. <sup>6</sup>He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. <sup>19</sup>I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. <sup>20</sup>I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. <sup>21</sup>Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: <sup>22</sup>Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. <sup>23</sup>They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup>I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."

#### *"You Are Mine"*

**Vs 1: I will come to you in the silence, I will lift you from all your fear.  
You will hear my voice, I claim you as my choice. Be still and know I am here.**

**Vs 2: I am hope for all who are hopeless, I am eyes for all who long to see.  
In the shadows of the night, I will be your light. Come and rest in me.**

**Refrain: Do not be afraid, I am with you. I have called you each by name.  
Come and follow me, I will bring you home; I love you and you are mine.**

**Vs 3: I am strength for all the despairing, healing for the ones who dwell in shame.  
All the blind will see, the lame will all run free, and all will know my name. [Refrain]**

**Vs 4: I am the Word that leads all to freedom, I am the peace the world cannot give.  
I will call your name, embracing all your pain. Stand up, now walk and live! [Refrain]**

#### *The Second Candle is Lit*

P: This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world. In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of truth. There is no need to hide or deny. God welcomes us as we are.

**C: We welcome you O Christ, Light of the World. In the midst of our suffering, help us to worship you in spirit and in truth.**

### Psalm 121

<sup>1</sup>I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? <sup>2</sup>My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. <sup>3</sup>He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; <sup>4</sup>indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. <sup>5</sup>The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; <sup>6</sup>the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. <sup>7</sup>The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; <sup>8</sup>the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

**Choir Sings: "Light One Candle" solo by Kelly Rehder and narration by Joe O'Reilly**

#### *The Third Candle is Lit*

P: This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world. In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of lament. We recognize our wounds and cry out to God. We accept God's invitation to express every feeling and question.

**C: We welcome you O Christ, Light of the World. In the midst of our suffering, help us to worship you in spirit and in truth.**

### Psalm 23

<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. <sup>2</sup>He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, <sup>3</sup>he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. <sup>4</sup>Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. <sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. <sup>6</sup>Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

#### *"Jesus, Name Above All Names"*

**Vs. 1: Jesus, name above all names, beautiful Savior, glorious Lord.  
Emmanuel, God is with us, blessed Redeemer, Living Word.**

**Vs. 2: Jesus, loving Shepherd, Vine of the branches, Son of God.  
Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, Lord of the universe, Light of the world.**

**Vs. 3: Jesus, way of salvation King of Kings, Lord of Lords.  
The Way, the truth, and the life Mighty Creator, My Savior and Friend.**

#### *The Fourth Candle is Lit*

P: This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world. In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of courage. Courage to be honest, to seek help, to comfort one another. Courage to dare to love and dream again.

**C: We welcome you O Christ, Light of the World. In the midst of our suffering, help us to worship you in spirit and in truth.**

### Isaiah 53:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? <sup>2</sup>He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup>He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. <sup>4</sup>Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup>But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

#### *"Heal Me, O Lord"*

**Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed, save me and I shall be saved;  
heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed, save me and I shall be saved.  
For thou art my praise, save me and I shall be saved.  
Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed, save me and I shall be saved;  
heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed, save me and I shall be saved.**

#### *The Christ Candle is Lit*

P: This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world. In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of hope. God is good. God is strong. God is near, leading us to a day without tears & pain, with out sin and death. Healing and deliverance are coming; if not now, then on that day.

**C: We welcome you O Christ, Light of the World. In the midst of our suffering, help us to worship you in spirit and in truth.**

### Matthew 11:28-30 *(Congregation reads together)*

<sup>28</sup>"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

**Reflection:** An excerpt from *"Learning to Walk in Darkness"* by Barbara Brown Taylor

#### *"Nothing But The Blood"*

**Vs 1: What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus;  
What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

**Chorus: Oh! precious is the flow That makes me white as snow;  
No other fount I know, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

**Vs 2: For my pardon, this I see, Nothing but the blood of Jesus;  
For my cleansing this my plea, Nothing but the blood of Jesus. [Chorus]**

**Vs 3: Nothing can for sin atone, Nothing but the blood of Jesus;  
Naught of good that I have done, Nothing but the blood of Jesus. [Chorus]**

**Vs 4: This is all my hope and peace, Nothing but the blood of Jesus;  
This is all my righteousness, Nothing but the blood of Jesus. [Chorus]**

### Communal Prayer:

*Worshippers are invited to bring prayers before God through the lighting of candles at the Holy Table. For centuries the lighting of candles has symbolized for Christians our trust that our prayers reach God's ears like a flame reaching for the heavens and that Christ—the light of the world—hears our prayers and responds.*

**Prayer Over the Candles:** Jesus, you are full of compassion, you understand our pain. Our suffering changes our experience of you and the celebration of your birth. We are caught between remembering happier times and grieving what might have been. In our loss we feel cut off, disconnected, adrift, alone. Root us in your steadfast love. Anchor us in your faithful promises. Hold us, and all who weep this holy season throughout the world; those who mourn, those far from home, those looking for work, the lonely, the addicted, the abused, the estranged, the oppressed, the enslaved, the poor, victims of war, the sick and dying. Shelter and sustain us with your healing and hope, your peace and light. We love you, we need you, we trust you. We ask this in your name Jesus, praying as you taught us...

**The Lord's Prayer:** *recording by Debbi St. John*

**Affirmation of Faith for Christmas Adapted from the Poem "First Coming" by Madeleine L'engle**

P: God did not wait till the world was ready, till nations were at peace.

C: God came when the Heavens were unsteady and prisoners cried out for release.

P: God did not wait for the perfect time.

C: God came when the need was deep and great. God came for the sinner and the saint.

P: God did not wait till hearts were pure.

C: God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt. To a world like ours, of anguish and shame. God came when the lights were out.

P: God came to a world which did not mesh, to heal its tangles and meet its scorn.

C: God came in the mystery of the Word made Flesh, in darkness the Maker of the stars was born.

P: We cannot wait till the world is sane to raise our songs to God.

C: For to share our grief, to touch our pain, God came with Love to us.

**Closing Song: "In Christ Alone"**

**V1: In Christ alone my hope is found; He is my light, my strength, my song; This cornerstone, this solid ground. Firm through the fiercest drought and storm; What heights of love, what depths of peace; When fears are stilled, when strivings cease. My comforter, my all in all; Here in the love of Christ I stand.**

**V2: In Christ alone, who took on flesh; Fullness of God in helpless babe; This gift of love and righteousness. Scorned by the ones He came to save; 'Til on that cross as Jesus died; The wrath of God was satisfied. For every sin on Him was laid; Here in the death of Christ I live.**

**V3: There in the ground, His body lay; Light of the world, by darkness slain; Then bursting forth in glorious day. Up from the grave, He rose again; And as He stands in victory; Sin's curse has lost its grip on me. For I am His and He is mine; Bought with the precious blood of Christ.**

**V4: No guilt in life, no fear in death; This is the power of Christ in me; From life's first cry to final breath. Jesus commands my destiny; No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man; Can ever pluck me from His hand. 'Til He returns or calls me home; Here in the power of Christ I'll stand; No power of hell, no scheme of man; Can ever pluck me from His hand. 'Til He returns or calls me home; Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.**

**Closing Prayer:**

P: We pray for the grace to bear our sufferings as Christ bore His for us,

C: I pray for the grace to bear my sufferings with dignity, humility, & forgiveness, as Christ bore his for me.

P: We pray for the grace to bear our sufferings as Christ bore His for us,

C: I pray for the grace to bear my sufferings, knowing that my sufferings are not like His and not like others. I pray for companionship, not comparison, in my sufferings.

P: We pray for the grace to bear our sufferings as Christ bore His for us,

C: I pray for my sufferings to soften my hearts toward my neighbors, to teach me to look for light in the midst of darkness, and to reveal to me God's saving grace in the midst of the deepest pain.

P: All we will ever suffer will be made known & will be made whole through Jesus Christ, who makes all things New.

C: In this I believe. In this I trust. In this I hope. In Christ, God makes all things New. Thanks be to God. Amen.

*"The Blessing" solo by Katie Schafer*

**Dismissal:** P: Go in peace, the light shines in the darkness, & the darkness has not overcome it. C: Thanks be to God.

*Worshippers are invited to leave in silence, all are welcome to stay and pray as long as desired.*



# The Longest Night

## An Advent Service of Remembrance



**St. Luke Lutheran Church • Pastor Eric Hanson**

**7:00PM • December 21, 2024**

**Gathering Hymn: "Precious Lord, Take My Hand"**

**Vs 1: Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.**

**Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light. Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.**

**Vs 2: When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near, when my life is almost gone, hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall. Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.**

**Vs 3: When the darkness appears and the night draws near, and the day is past and gone, at the river I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand. Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.**

**Welcome:**

*While Advent is a season of hope and Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels hopeful or like celebrating. Grief, illness, aging, depression, loneliness, unemployment, and loss are magnified. Even those who are not struggling with losses may feel the stress of preparations and expectations around Christmas time. The purpose of a "Longest Night" service is to provide a time of solace and reflection during the season of Christmas. We come together seeking healing and room to share grief, sadness, loneliness, or confusion when these things often feel out of place during the holidays.*

*In the Northern Hemisphere, December 21 is the longest night, the winter solstice. It marks the shortest day of the year, the official start of winter. Christmas day, of course, comes in close proximity to this longest night. We are reminded on this night that God performs some of His greatest acts of mercy and grace in the dark. On this darkest day of the year, we come with our own darkness to our Lord. We come with grief, with sin, with confession, and with things we don't understand, inviting God's light to shine in our dark places. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

**Opening Prayer:**

P: Merciful God, in this season of rejoicing, we come to you weary and grieving. In this season of feasting, we hunger for healing and relief. In this season of light, our hearts are veiled in sorrow and shadow. Will this season end? "Yes." We hear your, "Yes." Those who are weary will find rest. Those who mourn will be comforted. Those who hunger will be filled. The Light shines in the darkness,

C: And the darkness will not overcome it.

*"Can You Hear Me Whisper" written by Debbi St. John*

**Vs 1: Can you hear me whisper my silent prayer? Can you see my sorrow and my despair?**

**Can you see I've wandered so far from you? I need, I need, I need you, Lord.**

**Refrain: Jesus, you wipe away our tears. Jesus, you take away our fears. Jesus, you set the captives free. Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me...Jesus**

**Vs 2: Hear the cries of children that fill the air, Let them know your angels are always there. Let them find their refuge within your arms. They need, they need, they need you, Lord. [refrain]**

**Vs 3: Do you see the widow who's so alone? Do you see the homeless that have no home? Do you see the broken, their hearts are cold? We need, we need, we need you, Lord. [refrain]**

**Lighting of the Advent Candles**

*The First Candle is Lit*

P: This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world. In the light of God's love we acknowledge suffering as a sign of God's closeness to us, not His absence.

C: We welcome you O Christ, Light of the World. In the midst of our suffering, help us to worship you in spirit and in truth.