

Confession and Absolution

763 When Peace, like a River

- 1 When peace, like a river, attendeth my way;
 When sorrows, like sea billows, roll;
 Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
 It is well, it is well with my soul. Refrain
- ref It is well (It is well)
 with my soul, (with my soul),
 It is well, it is well with my soul.
- 2 Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
 Let this blest assurance control,
 That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate
 And hath shed His own blood for my soul. Refrain
- 3 He lives—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought;
 My sin, not in part, but the whole,
 Is nailed to His cross, and I bear it no more.
 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! Refrain
- 4 And, Lord, haste the day when our faith shall be sight,
 The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,
 The trumpet shall sound and the Lord shall descend;
 Even so it is well with my soul. Refrain

Text: Horatio G. Spafford, 1828–88, alt.
 Text: Public domain

Stand

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

Invocation

- P** In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Exhortation

LSB 184

- P** Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.
- P** Our help is in the name of the Lord,
C **who made heaven and earth.**
- P** I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,
C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

Kneel/Stand

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

Confession of Sins

LSB 184

- P** O almighty God, merciful Father,
C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

Absolution

LSB 185

- P** Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Stand

Service of the Word

Introit

Psalm 98:1-3; antiphon: Psalm 124:8

L Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

C Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

L The Lord has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

C He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

C Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

L Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Gloria Patri

LSB 186

C Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Kyrie

LSB 186

C Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

Gloria in Excelsis

LSB 187

P Glory be to God on high:

C and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee,
we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee, for Thy great glory.

O Lord God, heav'nly King, God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;

O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,

that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.

Thou that takest away the sin of the world, receive our prayer.

Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord.

Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,

art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Salutation and Collect of the Day

P The Lord be with you.

C And with thy spirit.

P Let us pray.

Eternal God, we commit to Your mercy and forgiveness the year now ending and commend to Your blessing and love the times yet to come. In the new year, abide among us with Your Holy Spirit that we may always trust in the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Sit

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 30:15-17

¹⁵For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel,

“In returning and rest you shall be saved;

in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.”

But you were unwilling, ¹⁶and you said,

“No! We will flee upon horses”;

therefore you shall flee away;

and, “We will ride upon swift steeds”;

therefore your pursuers shall be swift.
¹⁷A thousand shall flee at the threat of one;
 at the threat of five you shall flee,
 till you are left
 like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain,
 like a signal on a hill.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle

Romans 8:31b–39

If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
 we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Stand

Alleluia

LSB 190

C **Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.**

Holy Gospel

Luke 12:35–40

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the twelfth chapter.

C **Glory be to Thee, O Lord.**

³⁵[Jesus said:] “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! ³⁹But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

Nicene Creed

C **I believe in one God,
 the Father Almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth
 and of all things visible and invisible.
 And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
 the only-begotten Son of God,
 begotten of His Father before all worlds,
 God of God, Light of Light,
 very God of very God,**

**begotten, not made,
 being of one substance with the Father,
 by whom all things were made;
 who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
 and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
 and was made man;
 and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
 He suffered and was buried.
 And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
 and ascended into heaven
 and sits at the right hand of the Father.
 And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
 whose kingdom will have no end.
 And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the Lord and giver of life,
 who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
 who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
 who spoke by the prophets.
 And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
 I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
 and I look for the resurrection of the dead
 and the life † of the world to come. Amen.**

Sit

878 Abide with Me

- 1 Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.
- 2 I need Thy presence ev'ry passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.
- 3 Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings;
Tears for all woes, a heart for ev'ry plea.
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.
- 4 Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.
- 5 I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if Thou abide with me!
- 6 Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Text: Henry F. Lyte, 1793–1847, alt.
Text: Public domain

Sermon

Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

On New Year's Eve we gather to give thanks for the year past and pray for the year that lies ahead usually with mixed feelings. For some, 2023 was a bad year. For some, a good year. Inflation hurt many. Most saw prices grow faster than income. Some saw income grow faster than prices. Some suffered a financial setback. Some lost a loved one. Some had a birth in the family. Some saw a long-term relationship end. Others began a long-term relationship. For some, 2023 was a year of good health; others faced cancer and other horrible diseases. Covid declined in 2023 and is on the rise again. What will 2024 hold? For most, just a continuation of whatever is going on in their life. Sure, there are some big deal things on the horizon. A leap day. Another Presidential Election. The world goes on. As Ecclesiastes 1:9 says "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun."

At the risk of showing my age, Archie Campbell & Hee Haw came to mind. Archie's schtick was the vaudeville comedy routine "That's good. No, that's bad." Usually beginning with something that seems good, the routine includes a straight man saying "that's good", to which the comedian replies "no, that's bad" or vice versa and explains further, prompting an additional round, leaving the hearer amused or chuckling. Most explanations are valid, just showing a different perspective, sometimes comical.

Our lives are much like a "That's good. No, that's bad." routine. Things that seem to be good at the time prove to be bad and vice versa. Imagine being laid off from a job after 31 years. That's bad. No, that's good. Without being laid off after 31 years, I might still be an IT guy at Boeing. Another story is a tornado destroyed a farmer's hog shed. While that's bad, in the long run it was good. The farmer shifted to corn and beans, a blessing to both him and his family. While the automobile has been blamed for many of the ailments of the modern world, one can also make a case that by eliminating horses and mules as modes of transportation, the world is a healthier place as roads are no longer littered with animal feces and diseases. We each have our own stories.

Of course, there are bad things that are always bad. Sin leads to death. While we may comfort ourselves at the death of an older person "She isn't suffering" or "She is with Dad", death is never a good thing. Except rare cases, there is no way to comfort ourselves at the death of a child, or a young person. Death is never our friend. Death brings us face to face with our mortality. As much as we want to believe that we won't die soon, we really don't know. We don't know whether the latest COVID or RSV virus will be our demise. We don't know for sure whether we will see 2024. Someone, somewhere, will go to sleep tonight and not wake up in the morning. Yes, death is inevitable, unless the Lord comes again. And for you and I, death means being with God for all eternity, a very good thing. Yet, we fear death. We fear the unknown. Even though we have the sure hope of the resurrection, our human nature fears death. Our human nature does everything it can to cheat death. But the truth remains. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). That's bad. "but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23b) That's good. That's very good!

And there are bad things that the world calls good. The world calls pre-marital sex and living together good. God's Word teaches otherwise. Genesis 2:24 ²⁴ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Jesus expands the Sixth Commandment "You shall not commit adultery" in Matthew 5:27-28 ²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' ²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." There are many more examples. Putting ourselves first. Having gods such as our finances, our security, and/or the government. Treating our relationship with God as another activity that we schedule when convenient.

But there is good news. John 3:16 “¹⁶For God so loved the world,^[a] that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” Romans 5:6 “⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” Christ dying. The Son of God dying. God pouring out His wrath on His only Son. Jesus’s suffering for your sins and the sins of the whole world. That’s bad. No, that’s good. Paul continues in Romans 5:7-10 “⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” The really good news comes in Romans 5:15 “¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.”

The bad news is that sin entered the world through Adam and Eve who were tempted by Satan to be like God by eating the forbidden fruit. Satan flat out lied to convince them. “You will not surely die.” And while we’ve all wondered from time to time “Why did God let sin enter the world?”, we’re not told why, just that it has. And so, we do well to focus on the known God who as quickly as He prescribed the curses, He prescribed the solution. God’s only begotten Son was born of Mary, truly God and truly man. A man like you in all things but sin. A man who knows your pain and suffering. A man who knows what it is to be hungry. What is it to be betrayed by those closest to you. What it is to suffer. What it is to die. What it is to die the most miserable, most scandalous death, death on a cross. Not because of His own sins, but because of your sins and the sins of the whole world. Yet, His death was not permanent. While His death looked bad to the world, it was good. God raised Jesus from the dead to confirm His victory over sin, death, and the devil. Jesus took your sins to the cross and gives you His righteousness. The sinless for the sinful. The perfect for the imperfect.

Whatever 2023 held, 2024 holds great promise. But more important than the promise of the New Year is the Good News that no matter what the bad news is, there is Good News. You are God’s beloved child. You are His heir. You will inherit eternal life and live with God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for all eternity. That is good news! Amen

Votum

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C Amen.

Stand

Offertory

LSB 192

C Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Amen.

Prayer of the Church

Lord God, eternal Father and Giver of every good gift, we commit to Your mercy the year now ending. Forgive us our sins where we have done wrong, work in our hearts true repentance and faith, and redeem us from all the evil of this past year. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, You have shown us hard times and exposed many idols among us; yet, if we are faithless, Christ remains faithful and will not deny Himself. Help our unbelief, that we may know nothing can separate us from Your love in Christ Jesus. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, You have preserved this congregation in the faith for another year. We give You thanks for Your blessing and guidance. Grant that, by Your grace, we may continue to serve You in this place. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, preserve our preaching and teaching so it is faithful to Your Word. Ensure that Your Holy Sacraments are administered according to Your commands and promises, and help us to reach out in love to our community. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, we commend to Your blessing and love the times yet to come. Until You bring this life on earth to an end, guard and guide us by Your strong arm. Lead us according to Your Word, and renew in us clean hearts that trust You and show love toward our neighbors. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, hear our prayers for our nation and its government. Preserve our republic, we implore You. Give health and competence to those who serve in positions of authority [*especially* _____]. Protect those who serve in the line of danger for our safety, and give peace in our time. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, we give thanks to You for the many mercies and gifts You showered upon us this past year. You have given life, healed and comforted. You have provided for our spiritual and physical well-being. You take care of us every day. All this You have done, not because of any merit in us, but only out of Your love for us in Jesus, our Savior. Comfort and sustain Your children who suffer from sickness, need or affliction. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, strengthen all who commune at this altar, that the body and blood of Christ would keep them in the one, true faith to life everlasting. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, You neither slumber nor sleep as You keep watch over us, while our eyes ever grow heavy with sleep. Have compassion on our weak flesh and pour out Your Spirit upon us, that in faith we would stay dressed for action with our lamps burning until our Master comes. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, abide among us in this new year with Your Holy Spirit, that we may always trust in the saving name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Service of the Sacrament

Preface

LSB 194

- P** The Lord be with you.
- C** **And with thy spirit.**
- P** Lift up your hearts.
- C** **We lift them up unto the Lord.**
- P** Let us give thanks unto the Lord, our God.
- C** **It is meet and right so to do.**

Proper Preface (Full)

- P** It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; for in the mystery of the Word made flesh You have given us a new revelation of Your glory that, seeing You in the person of Your Son, we may know and love those things which are not seen. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

Sanctus

LSB 195

- C** **Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth;
heav'n and earth are full of Thy glory.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.**

Lord's Prayer

LSB 196

- P** 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.

C For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Words of Our Lord

LSB 197

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."

Pax Domini

LSB 197

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C Amen.

Agnus Dei

LSB 198

**C O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.
O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.
O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, grant us Thy peace.
Amen.**

Sit

Distribution

The pastor and those who assist him receive the body and blood of Christ first and then distribute them to those who come to receive, saying:

Left Column

LSB 199

Take, eat; this is the true body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, given into death for your sins.

Amen.

Take, drink; this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for the forgiveness of your sins.

Amen.

In dismissing the communicants, the following is said:

The Dismissal

LSB 199

P The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. Depart † in peace.

C Amen.

760 What God Ordains Is Always Good

1 What God ordains is always good:

His will is just and holy.

As He directs my life for me,

I follow meek and lowly.

My God indeed

In ev'ry need

Knows well how He will shield me;

To Him, then, I will yield me.

2 What God ordains is always good:

He never will deceive me;

He leads me in His righteous way,

And never will He leave me.

I take content

What He has sent;

His hand that sends me sadness

Will turn my tears to gladness.

- 3 What God ordains is always good:
 His loving thought attends me;
 No poison can be in the cup
 That my physician sends me.
 My God is true;
 Each morning new
 I trust His grace unending,
 My life to Him commending.
- 4 What God ordains is always good:
 He is my friend and Father;
 He suffers naught to do me harm
 Though many storms may gather.
 Now I may know
 Both joy and woe;
 Someday I shall see clearly
 That He has loved me dearly.
- 5 What God ordains is always good:
 Though I the cup am drinking
 Which savors now of bitterness,
 I take it without shrinking.
 For after grief
 God gives relief,
 My heart with comfort filling
 And all my sorrow stilling.
- 6 What God ordains is always good:
 This truth remains unshaken.
 Though sorrow, need, or death be mine,
 I shall not be forsaken.
 I fear no harm,
 For with His arm
 He shall embrace and shield me;
 So to my God I yield me.

Text: Samuel Rodigast, 1649–1708; tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941, alt.
 Text: Public domain

Distribution Hymn

Stand

Nunc Dimittis

LSB 199

- ☩ Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word,
 for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people,
 a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.
 Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
 as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

Thanksgiving

LSB 200

- ☩** O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,
☩ and His mercy endureth forever.

Post-Communion Collect

- ☩** Let us pray.
 We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
☩ Amen.

Salutation

LSB 201

P The Lord be with you.**C** **And with thy spirit.****Benedicamus**

LSB 202

A Bless we the Lord.**C** **Thanks be to God.****Benediction**

LSB 202

P The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and † give you peace.

C **Amen, amen, amen.****771 Be Still, My Soul, before the Lord**

- 1 Be still, my soul, before the Lord,
For God is always near.
Before your mind is moved to pray,
God listens and will hear.
- 2 You need not multiply your words
Nor pray with practiced art.
Beyond all speech, God understands
The hunger of your heart.
- 3 Wait, then, in quiet confidence,
Your anxious thoughts at rest.
God knows your needs before you ask
And works for what is best.
- 4 Be still, my soul, before the Lord;
On God in patience wait.
God's love, unseen, surrounds your life;
God's help will not be late.

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