



**JESUS OF NAZARETH**  
**JESUS GOES BEFORE US**  
**MATTHEW 26:30-75**  
**11-01-20**

**All = bold sections – read together**

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

*Sung together = italics*

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light.

**Reflect**

Vote. Let the Holy Spirit be your guide. God will accomplish what He wants. But, to dear Christians on all the many sides of this thing: stop trying to turn Jesus into a political strategy. His kingdom is eternal, and it doesn't rise or fall depending on who's sitting on earthly thrones. We should be more concerned about our citizenship in that kingdom – Melissa (A blog from *Your Mom Has A Blog* entitled, "We're Still Looking For The Wrong Jesus")

**Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." John 18:36**

**Welcome**

Happy Reformation Sunday! 250 years ago, the Protestant Church was born through the reforming actions of people like Martin Luther and John Calvin. We are part of that history as a church within the Christian Reformed denomination. Our religious accent is Reformed. We emphasize that we are saved by the grace alone, through faith alone, by Christ alone, to the glory of the Father alone as told through Scripture alone. May we cherish our history without idolizing it. May we embrace our accent without looking down on other accents. May there be a healthy balance between organization and organism, between institution and body so that we might not become distorted or malformed. Furthermore, this is election week. May we recognize the importance of politics without idolizing it. May we embrace the supremacy of the kingdom of God over the empires and politics of this world. May we know that no matter what happens, God is sovereign and in control and our trust is in him and not the systems and policies of the world. With these in mind this morning, let's come to God together by saying....

**May the love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit be ours in abundance!**

**Call to Worship – Psalm 27 OF DAVID**

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

**One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple. For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me**



**high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.**

Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me! You have said, “Seek my face.” My heart says to you, “Your face, LORD, do I seek.” Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation! For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in.

**Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence. I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!**

Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

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Who/what is the stronghold of your life?

What would cause you great pain and fear if it was taken away?

Who/what is your rock?

Who/what will remain stable, consistent and supreme no matter what happens in your life or in life around you?

### **Christ Candle** – Maldives

Jesus of Nazareth said that to be a Christian means to be maltreated for his name’s sake (Matthew 5:11) and the apostle Paul said that “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). Mistreatment as a disciple of Jesus is not a matter of *if* but a matter of *when* and a matter of *degree*. In America, the land of religious freedom, we have it pretty easy in that there is minimal outright persecution against Christians. May we make the most of our religious freedom to honor Christ and give credible and coherent witness to him! At the same time, may we be aware of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who don’t share the same freedom that we do.

The Maldives are the 14<sup>th</sup> most difficult place to live as a Christian today. In a country of roughly a ½ million, there are a couple thousand Christians. The Maldives’ constitution requires all citizens to be Muslim. Conversion from Islam means that someone can be stripped of their citizenship and punished under Shariah law. Even foreign workers who are Christians are closely watched, which makes church life extremely difficult and practically non-existent. Churches are outlawed, and openly carrying a Bible is illegal. **The country is so tightly controlled by Islamic law that there is not even a Bible fully translated into the native language of most citizens of the Maldives.**

Prayer Points: Official policy dictates every citizen must be Muslim. Pray that God would work in the hearts of the Maldives’ leaders to change this law, and that God would be working in the hearts of Maldivian Muslims. Pray that God would lead secret believers to find fellowship with one another and access to the Bible. Local media reports that drug abuse – in an effort to find some relief from the tight restrictions in the country – has become the biggest social issue in the Maldives. Pray that Maldivians will turn to Jesus to experience true freedom.

**Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine His light!**



**Song** – Great Are You Lord -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKzXZPFBwLQ>

*You give life, You are love, You bring light to the darkness  
You give hope, You restore every heart that is broken  
Great are You, Lord*

*It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise, we pour out our praise  
It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise to You only*

*You give life, You are love, You bring light to the darkness  
You give hope, You restore, every heart that is broken  
Great are You, Lord*

*It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise, we pour out our praise  
It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise to You only*

*It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise, we pour out our praise  
It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise to You only*

*And all the earth will shout Your praise  
Our hearts will cry, these bones will sing  
Great are You, Lord (3X's)*

*It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise, we pour out our praise  
It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise  
To You only*

*It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise, we pour out our praise  
It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise  
To You only*

**Centering Prayer** – A Collect of Peace (pause after each line to allow for reflection)

**Most holy God, the source of all good desires, all right judgements, and all just works: (pause)**

**Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, (pause)**

**So that our minds may be fixed on the doing of your will (pause)**

**And that we, being delivered from the fear of all enemies, may live in peace and quietness (pause)**

**Through the mercies of Christ Jesus our Savior, Amen (pause)**



**Song** – A Mighty Fortress Is Our God -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vT6HQ1QaU4>

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing  
Our helper He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe  
His craft and pow'r are great and armed with cruel hate  
On earth is not his equal*

*If we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing  
Were not the right Man on our side; the Man of God's own choosing  
You ask who that may be; Christ Jesus it is He  
The Lord of Hosts His name; from age to age the same  
And He must win the battle*

*And tho' this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us  
We will not fear for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us (2X's)*

*A mighty fortress is our God, His kingdom is forever  
A mighty fortress is our God, His kingdom is forever (2X's)  
His kingdom is forever (4X's)*

*If we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing*

**Song** – From The Inside Out -- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9azOSb\\_bONA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9azOSb_bONA)

*A thousand times I've failed still Your mercy remains  
And should I stumble again I'm caught in Your grace  
Everlasting, Your light will shine when all else fades  
Never ending, Your glory goes beyond all fame  
In my heart and my soul, Lord I give You control  
Consume me from the inside out,  
Lord, let justice and praise become my embrace  
To love you from the inside out*

*Your will above all else my purpose remains  
The art of losing myself in bringing You praise  
Everlasting, Your light will shine when all else fades  
Never ending, Your glory goes beyond all fame  
In my heart and my soul, Lord I give You control  
Consume me from the inside out,  
Lord, let justice and praise become my embrace  
To love you from the inside out*

*Everlasting, Your light will shine when all else fades  
Never ending, Your glory goes beyond all fame  
And the cry of my heart is to bring You praise  
From the inside out Lord my soul cries out  
From the inside out Lord my soul cries out to you*



## **Offering** – Ripon Christian

**We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.**

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

## **Youth Celebration** – A Prayer For Our Young Adults in College

Loving Heavenly Father, we pray Your protection our college youth and over the many other young Christian men and women that are attending colleges or universities today, knowing that often they teach contrary to your gospel truth. Protect their hearts and minds, when they are confronted with agendas that deny the truth of Your Word. Strengthen them when they are ridiculed for their faith in Jesus of Nazareth. Keep all who have accepted the Lord Jesus as their Savior under the shadow of Your wing and the palm of Your hand, for You have promised that none shall pluck them out of Your hand. Give them your wisdom for the choices that they make choosing a career path or the subjects they decide to study. Keep them away from temptation, and continually convict them of the truth of Your Word, especially when they are studying courses that are often opposed to the truth of Scripture. May they continually and consistently be aware of your presence in their lives and find support from other believers in Jesus. Strengthen their faith in You so that they emerge from their studies as stronger disciples of Jesus. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

## **Scripture Reading** – Matthew 26:30-75

Things are getting dark and sinister events are transpiring as Jesus moves ever closer to crucifixion. We cannot avoid these challenging verses as they speak to the evil and corruption and sin that is in the world and to which we can be complicit in. We, more often than we care to admit fall asleep on the job of being Jesus' disciples. We often misplace our passion into misguided actions that are anti-Jesus and anti- kingdom of God. We often reject Jesus' teachings, his ways and his life. We more often than we care to admit, deny Jesus of Nazareth in our thoughts, words and deeds. A significant part of being healthy and growing disciples of Jesus is to be aware of how we fall away from Jesus and his gospel; of how we drift away from gospel truth and the Jesus way. May our hearts and minds be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as we look at four ways not to follow Jesus.

Please read Matthew 26:30-75 now.

## **Gospel Message** – Jesus Goes Before Us

In 2018, Char and I had a trip of a lifetime. We went to Israel with a group of 30 people, including some long-time friends. To walk the same ground and be in the same places that Abraham, David and of course, Jesus of Nazareth changed history was beyond amazing. There was one aspect of the trip that I really didn't pay much attention to leading up to the trip, but once into the trip recognized was immensely invaluable, comforting and helpful – a guide! His name was Shai, a native Israeli who was extremely knowledgeable about the history of Israel and where all the important places were. He also knew what to avoid, the times to arrive for best viewing and the best spots to engage with the history of the place. All of us were very grateful that Shai went before us to show us the way; to show us how to make the most of the time that we had; to teach us the most about the places we visited and to befriend us as we spent nearly 12 days with him.

In our passage today, Jesus promises his disciples that he would go before them after he had risen



from the dead. Why would this be a big deal and what might it have to do with us today? Well, everything. Matthew 27:30-75 is all about our proclivity to fall away from Jesus, to misguide our passions, to reject and to deny him. We may not like to hear this but it is true. We often underestimate the power of the weakness of the flesh to lead us away from Jesus of Nazareth and the life changing truth of his gospel of salvation. While this chapter is a dark chapter, a rebellious chapter, a sad chapter, a violent chapter; Jesus makes sure that there is also light – a promise that is true for us today: Jesus goes before us just as he did with them. Let's take a closer look at this passage so that we might apply it better into our daily lives. Matthew provides us with four scenes and an introduction by Jesus. The introduction will predict the disciples falling away from Jesus that very night and specifically Peter denying Jesus three times. The first scene is in the garden of Gethsemane where we see the disciples (three of them anyway) fall asleep on Jesus at a most difficult hour for him. The second scene is also in the Garden but involves Judas and betrayal. We will also see misguided passion that is based on a wrong understanding of who Jesus is and what he is about by Peter. The third scene is outright rejection of Jesus by the religious leaders who also can't fathom that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. This gets ugly with oppression and violence. The fourth and final scene is denial of Jesus by Peter, his most passionate follower and which was predicted by Jesus at the beginning of the passage. In all these scenes there is a distancing from Jesus, a falling away from him or a remaining distant to him. The importance and love within the promise of Jesus to his disciples of going before them will become evident if not already. Jesus is for us and despite our falling away because of the weakness of the flesh, he is already ahead of us. **Thus, Jesus goes before us in order to be for us.**

Prediction and Promise: Jesus and the eleven disciples (Judas has departed to conspire with the Jewish leaders to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver) have just finished the first Lord's Supper (or Communion or Eucharist) that co-opted the Passover meal into a visible and tangible and vocal demonstration and proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ as the slain lamb that saves us from our sins. They sing a



closing hymn together (pretty cool to think of Jesus singing in worship – can't wait to hear his voice!) and head east from Jerusalem, crossing the Kidron valley (left picture) up onto the Mount of Olives where the Garden of Gethsemane is (picture to the right).



When they arrive at the mount of Olives, Jesus gives them terrible news: they will fall away from him. After following him for three years, they will abandon him, they will desert him, they will leave him. But Jesus doesn't let them linger on this thought for he immediately promises that he will be raised from the dead (WOW!) and will go before them in Galilee (up north around the sea of Galilee, Nazareth and Capernaum). But they don't hear or understand this last part. Peter, their spokesperson in Matthew, immediately says no way, "I will never fall away!" Jesus corrects him with sobering news: you are wrong Peter for you will not only fall away by leaving, you will also deny me not once, not twice but three times! Peter shows his lack of understanding to who Jesus is by contradicting him and making a promise he will not keep – "even if I must die, I will not deny you". And the rest of the disciples say the same. Now, I'm pretty sure most of us would say the same thing as the disciples; that



we would not deny Jesus or fall away from him. That confidence is not bad if it is grounded in a real dependance on Jesus and the Holy Spirit to keep us strong in adversity. It is bad if it is grounded in our own determination and will-power to remain faithful. Why? Jesus addresses this in the first scene.

First Scene: Jesus instructs his disciples to grab a seat in the garden except for Peter, James and John whom he instructs to go with him a little distance away. They are to be with Jesus to “watch” with him. In other words, while the others may rest and sleep, I want you three to stay awake, to stay alert, to be with me and attentive to me as I pray. They don’t. Jesus pours his heart out to the Father as he contemplates the horrors about to be inflicted upon him. So much so that he even asks the Father to make this go away if possible. That is how horrific and heinous and excruciating this was going to be – Jesus wants out if possible. However, it is qualified by a most faithful and perfect dependance on the will of the Father – “yet, not as I will, but as you will.” The weight of the sin of the world is pressing down on him; he’s crying out to the Father with sorrow and a troubled demeanor – he is not okay, he is “sorrowful even unto death”! Yet, the three closest disciples to Jesus aren’t moved, they aren’t interested, they don’t care enough. So, they fall asleep on Jesus! They fall asleep on the job! They fall asleep when Jesus needs them most! Ouch! This is an incredibly awkward scene for the disciples who just pledged to never fall away from Jesus nor deny him. Jesus goes to them sleeping and wakes them up and addresses Peter with a possibly sarcastic, “So, could you not watch with me one hour?” Peter, the passionate one fell asleep. Jesus tells why – “the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” Do not underestimate the power of weakness. Do not underestimate the power of weakness to lure us away from the will of Jesus; from being with him and staying alert and awake to his truth, his ways and his life as we navigate our daily lives. How many of us are sleepwalking? How many of us have been lured asleep to the will and work of Jesus today? This is the sin of sloth. It is not doing what we know we should be doing. It is giving in to the weak desires of the flesh so that what we know is right in the Spirit is not done. Woe is me! Does this not describe every one of us to various degrees? I think of the Apostle Paul in Romans exclaiming that the things he wants to do, he doesn’t and the things he doesn’t want to do, he does (Romans 7:15-25). He doesn’t understand his own actions and his conclusion is “wretched man that I am.” He is right. That is us. That is me. Paul then asks, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” The answer (v. 25) “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Jesus delivers us because he has gone before us in order to be for us. Jesus of Nazareth conquers sin by living the perfect life I could not. “It is finished” Jesus exclaims on the cross. Yes! He has done it for us. He has beaten and defeated sin so that in him we might find the forgiveness of sins. I will still sin. Yet, Jesus has gone before me to forgive all my sins, not in part but the whole! A thousand times I have failed the song says, yet God’s mercy remains for us in Christ with the forgiveness of sins!

Second Scene: The second scene involves the arrival of Judas, the betrayer and a large number of people armed with swords and clubs who are sent by the Jewish religious leaders. Judas has arranged a sign that would let the crowd know which one they are to seize. It would be with the most ironic action possible – a kiss. A kiss that is meant to convey friendship and peace between the two, is now meant to be a means of betrayal, disloyalty, unfaithfulness and treachery. Furthermore, Judas greets Jesus as “Rabbi” and not Lord or Messiah. He is just another teacher who has not fulfilled Judas’ desires for a political leader to overthrow Caesar and the Roman empire and establish a God-centered theocracy that would reign through the Jewish nation of Israel as God’s great light to the world. Jesus’ response is



amazing. He responds by calling Judas friend, acknowledging what the kiss was supposed to mean and making the ironic contrast even more apparent. The sign has been given. The crowd seizes Jesus. Peter wakes up! He draws his sword and attacks the servant of the High Priest and cuts off his ear. The only way to cut off an ear without embedding the sword in the shoulder (coming straight down) is to take a horizontal swing with the person tilting their head to the side to get out to the way but exposing the ear which is now at top. In other words, Peter was going for decapitation. He was going for the kill. Passionate Peter overreacts again! His passion for Jesus that was just questioned by his falling asleep, while commendable, is misguided. While he is for Jesus, he is for Jesus in the wrong way. He doesn't understand Jesus could call down an army of angels and make short work of this puny insurrection against him as Messiah (compared to the host of angels at his disposal). But that is not the way of Jesus. Peter's passion is misguided and he falls away from Jesus' will because he wields in a way that is contrary to the way of Jesus which is not through violence. Yes, violence will come his way and the way of the disciples, but they are not to wield it for Jesus. It will come to them but it was not to come from them. At this, all the disciples scatter; they flee; they run away; they abandon Jesus – just as he said they would. Jesus is never wrong! At the thought of not being able to defend Jesus and themselves from this crowd wielding swords and club, they run in fear. They fall away.

We, like Peter can wield passion and power for Jesus and his kingdom in a way that is actually antithetical to Jesus and the kingdom. We can become misguided, mistaken and off target with our passion. Our passion can, like Peter lead to violence and acting in ways contrary to the way of Jesus. We can do violence to people not only with swords and clubs, but also with words and looks. Social Media has exposed an ugly and dark side of Christianity – misguided passionate people tearing down others in the name of Jesus. Instead of being for others, they are against them; they are over them; they are better than. Reflect on what's happening in our country today and how we might be contributing to it; to where we might be misguided with our passion; where we might be misled by our political convictions over our faith in Jesus of Nazareth, his truth and his life and his ways. Please do not hear what I am not saying. I am not saying we cannot be political. I am not saying we cannot be for one party or another. I am not saying we cannot discuss why one position might be better than another. I am saying that when we over-identify with it to the degree that we think in general categories where this or that group is "evil" and we vilify them, we have crossed a line. I'm not sure how it is possible to love an enemy that we seek to vilify. And that is what we are called to do – love our enemy, not denigrate them and call them all sorts of names. I'm not sure how we can value the kingdom of God as supreme and our true home when we over-identify with America and make preserving her as our home our supreme good. Let's be passionate. But let us be passionate for Jesus in the way of Jesus. Let us serve. Let us be kind. Let us be peaceful. Let us be gentle. Let us be loving. Let us be good. Let us be self-controlled (the Fruit of the Spirit). All in Christ and for Christ. Why? Because Jesus of Nazareth has gone before us. He has shown us the way. He has shown us what is most valuable. He has shown us humility. He has shown us for what we are to live and die for. And it isn't America or a particular political party. Jesus has gone ahead of Peter and restores him as a disciple of his. He goes ahead of us too, and restores us when we have gone astray with our passions.

Third Scene: Matthew's telling of these scenes darkens even more. Not only is there betrayal and misguided passion but now there is outright rejection of Jesus of Nazareth from within the very people





called out by God through which the whole world would be (and is in Christ Jesus) blessed. Jesus is brought before the religious leaders, specifically Caiaphas, the High Priest for that year. They were looking to charge him with a crime in order to put him away, either behind bars or for good. And they try. And they try. And they try. “At last, two came forward” and correctly quoted Jesus saying he was able to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days.” The high priest questions him on this and Jesus remains silent which, interestingly prompts him to flat out ask Jesus if he was the Messiah, the Son of God (why didn’t they start off with this?!?). Jesus affirms by saying, “You have said so” and to emphasize the truth of this statement goes on to implicate himself even more – “from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right-hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” In essence, “I am he!” Because they did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah (because they believed the Messiah to be human and not divine), he would be blaspheming to them (equating himself with God). This indeed was punishable by death in Jewish law. They finally had him where they wanted him – in the crossfire of legal punishment under Jewish law. But that was not enough. Their weak and deeply hardened flesh wanted more. They spit on him. They punch him. They slap him. They physically abuse him and disgrace him. It will get worse. This is only the prelude to the ultimate act of rejection – crucifixion.

How might we reject Jesus today? Well, the atheists and agnostics and the religions and spiritualities that believe Jesus is not the Savior all do by definition. These are whole lifestyles that reject Jesus like these religious leaders did. However, we can also reject Jesus through individual acts. These acts are acts of sin that rejects the truth of Jesus, the way of Jesus and/or the life of Jesus. They are acts of unbelief that places control and authority of my life in my own hands. I want to do what I want to do when I want to and how I want to. It is the complete opposite of Jesus’ faith that says, “not my will but your will be done.” We all do this. We all sin. However, as a disciple of Jesus, this sin does not define us. Much like the apostle Paul in Romans 7, we recognize sin as not a part of my identity but something foreign to me. When we do this, we repent and turn back to Jesus, who has gone before us once again to embrace us because he is for us. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as redeemed children of God. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin so that we might reject it in Christ and turn back to the truths and ways of Jesus. That is, to once again live according to the will of God and not the will of a weak and hardened flesh. In other words, it is to be true to our identity as saints in Christ who occasionally sin. We strive for obedience to Jesus by faith through grace but when we fail, when we fall asleep or reject Jesus or are misguided in our passions, Jesus has gone ahead of us to receive us again. How many times? As many times as we turn back to him in faith.

Scene Four: The fourth and final scene of this chapter describes the fulfillment of the specific prediction that Peter would deny Jesus three times before the rooster crows. Peter is out in the courtyard of Caiaphas while Jesus is being interrogated by the religious leaders. It is a cold night and people are huddling up around a fire to stay warm. Peter is one of them. A servant girl connects Peter with Jesus but Peter simply denies it in front of them all – “I don’t know what you mean.” He then is confronted by another servant girl by the entrance to the courtyard (apparently he has moved away from the fire as the heat of the question got too hot for him) and again denies knowing Jesus to all there but this time even more emphatically with an oath – “I swear to you on my life that I do not know Jesus.” It gets even more harsh. A third person, a bystander asserts that he most certainly is “one



of them” based on his accent. This time, Peter verbally denies Jesus in the clearest way possible, with a curse. May I be cursed with a debilitating disease the rest of my life if I am lying....May I be cursed with the loss of all my loved ones and all my possessions if I am lying...May something terrible happen to me if I am not telling the truth – “I do not know the man.” “The man.” Peter can’t even say his name. He has sworn an oath and called a curse upon himself in proving that he did not know Jesus. But it was a lie. It was denial. He does know Jesus – more importantly, Jesus knows him! Three times he denies Jesus – just as Jesus said. Then the rooster crows and Peter remembers. He remembers that Jesus predicted this very scene. Who can do that? The Son of God, that’s who and with this realization, Peter snaps back to his true self in Christ and is convicted and breaks down weeping for what he has done. How could he do this? He said he would die before he denied Jesus and here he is hours later doing that very thing he vowed not to do not once, not twice but three times and not simply with a denial but with an oath and a curse as well. How could he do this? Answer: The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. That is how. And it is how and why we do it today too. We all deny Jesus at times. We deny his truths. We deny his ways. We deny his life. We sin. We act with unbelief. We give in to fear – fear of pain, fear of death, fear of being laughed at, fear of losing friends, fear of not being accepted, fear of not belonging, fear of loss of freedom, fear of \_\_\_\_\_. Yet, but, still, nonetheless, Jesus goes before us and is there with arms wide open. He is ahead of us to lead us and guide us and receive us. Jesus is before us so that he can be for us. May we, in the strength and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, keep turning back to Jesus who continually is before us in order to be for us.

### **Communion Meditation**

*Professing:* (Nicene Creed)

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 the 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 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 on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

**And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe one holy catholic 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.**

*Proclaiming:* 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (Paraphrased)

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, “this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, “this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins.”

**Remember and believe that the body & blood of Jesus was given & shed for the forgiveness of sins.**



**Song** – This Is Amazing Grace -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPQKj2Zptr0>

*Who breaks the power of sin and darkness  
Whose love is mighty and so much stronger  
The King of Glory, the King above all kings  
Who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder  
And leaves us breathless in awe and wonder  
The King of Glory, the King above all kings  
This is amazing grace, this is unfailing love  
That You would take my place  
That You would bear my cross  
You laid down Your life, that I would be set free  
Oh, Jesus, I sing for all that You've done for me  
Who brings our chaos back into order,  
Who makes the orphan a son and daughter?  
The King of Glory, the King of Glory  
Who rules the nations with truth and justice,  
Shines like the sun in all of its brilliance?  
The King of Glory, the King above all kings  
This is amazing grace, this is unfailing love  
That You would take my place  
That You would bear my cross  
You laid down Your life, that I would be set free  
Oh, Jesus, I sing for all that You've done for me  
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain  
Worthy is the King who conquered the grave (3X's)  
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain  
Worthy, worthy, worthy  
This is amazing grace, this is unfailing love  
That You would take my place  
That You would bear my cross  
You laid down Your life, that I would be set free  
Oh, Jesus, I sing for all that You've done for me*

**Sending as Disciples of Jesus:** Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

May we go this week into whatever God has planned for us knowing that he goes before us in order to be for us. May we actively participate in his unfolding drama as his faithful disciples this week.

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**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen!**