

*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.
May we together experience the presence of God*

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We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord

Prelude

Welcome

Announcements – Joys/Concerns



“Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good?”

That is the question Peter asks us today. That verse seems a little naïve, don't you think? People are hurt trying to do good all the time. Think of aid workers in times of war, or those trying to help the hurting in totalitarian regimes, or those attempting to stand up against injustice even in representative democracies who suffer persecution and misrepresentation on a regular basis. The list can go on and on...

But then maybe Peter is aware of all of that, which is why, as we read his words today, he moves on from verse 13 and immediately says, “but even if you do suffer for doing what is right” in the very next verse. Maybe he is more aware of the world in which we live than it seems at first because he goes on to say, “Don't live in fear; don't hesitate to do good; don't let the threats cause you to not do what you know your faith calls you to do and to be.” “Always be ready to make your defense”.

What a powerful statement about the need to be overt Christians in a world that has become cynical, let alone, dangerous.

What a challenge given to us, to the church, to be prepared to speak, to give account for the hope within us. Today Peter's call is to not be quiet, to not keep things under our hats, but to live out loud in a way that draws attention to what we are doing and who we are and most importantly to why we do what we do. This is a call to evangelism, to knocking on doors and telling our story.

Now, Peter is quick to tell us how we go about doing this. We don't do it with anger; we don't do it with force and annoyance, with tricks and sleight of hand. No, do it with gentleness and reverence, he writes. And tell the honest truth, as you know it.

But notice one more thing about this telling. Nowhere does it ask us to count the numbers who believe us. Nowhere is there supposed to be a measuring of the response to the words that are spoken. Yes, of course, we hope to make a difference in the world around us; we hope to bring influence for the cause of Christ and to make disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world. But in the end, our audience is God. Our measuring rod is faithfulness to the call of God. God will take care of the response. Our task is to always be ready to give a defense to anyone who sees the hope within us. With

these thoughts in our hearts let us come to the Lord today and unite in our call to worship...

A Call to Worship (Psalm 66)

Transforming God, you have taken the world's darkness and re-created a world filled with the joy of light and hope.
Come and hear the good news of God's love for all creation.

Restoring God, you have turned defeat into sudden victory, and re-created a world filled with the joy of peace and shalom.
Come and hear the good news of God's awesome powers.

Renewing God, we respond to your mighty deeds with songs of praise, worship and thankful prayers. You alone are God!
**Come and hear the good news of God's blessings on us all.
Glory and honor, power and dominion belong to God alone.
Amen.**

Praise Hymn FWS 2025 "As The Deer"

Author: Marty Nystrom

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**As the deer pants for the water
so my soul longs after you;
you alone are my heart's desire,
and I long to worship you.**

Refrain:

**You alone are my strength and shield;
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire,
and I long to worship you.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

As God's beloved children, we are invited to come to our God with the fullness of our lives, to admit our love and our hate, to admit our faith and our fear. Trusting in God's mercy, let us make our confession.

Holy and gracious God, at times we feel so frail and fragile, getting blown about by the latest crisis, by bad news, by our own short tempers and failings. You call us to hold fast to what is good, but so often we flounder, unable to find that solid thing that will center us again. Help us, we pray. Help us to see you as our center, and to cling to the good that you create in the world. Help us to set aside all our jealousies and prejudices, all of our betrayals and lies, all that adds to the world's hurt. Help us to grow even more into Christ's likeness, that we will bear his love and truth to the world. We pray in his name. Amen.

New Testament Reading..... 1 Peter 3:13-22 (NRSV)

13 Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? 14 But even if you do suffer for doing what is right,[a] you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear,[b] and do not be intimidated, 15 but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you, 16 yet do it with gentleness and respect. Maintain a good conscience so that, when you are maligned,[c] those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. 18 For Christ also suffered[d] for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you[e] to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, 20 who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight lives, were saved through water. 21 And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for[f] a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

This is the Word of God, for the people of God, **Thanks be to God!**

Children's Sermon

Faith Hymn UMH#304 "Easter People, Raise Your Voices"

Author: William M. James (1979)

Copyright: Words © 1979 The United Methodist Publishing House

Tune Information

Composer: Henry T. Smart (1867)

1

**Easter people raise your voices
Sounds of heaven in earth should ring
Christ has brought us Heaven's choices
Heavenly music let it ring
Alleluia. Alleulia.
Easter people let it sing**

2

**Fear of death can no more stop us
From our pressing here below
For our Lord empowered us
To triumph over every foe
Alleluia. Alleluia.
On to victory now we go**

3

**Every day to us is Easter
With its resurrection song
When in trouble move the faster
to our God who rights the wrong
Alleluia. Alleluia.**

See the power of heavenly throngs.

Message

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

God of all ages and God of love, who sees and hears your people at all time.

We have seen you acting and sustaining us in the midst of our challenges and hopelessness.

In times of hunger, you provided food for us to eat. When we had no place to lay our heads, you provided us with shelter. When we are faced with death, we have seen your hand of protection. Amidst sickness, you have given us hope and courage to live on, not give up; to stand strong and not to be selfish for the responsibilities you have entrusted us with.

Therefore, dear God, we continue praying that you give us hope amidst hopelessness, courage in times of despair, healing in times of sickness, provision in times of lack, protection in times of danger to live and hope for a better world through Jesus Christ who is our sustainer, provider, and protector. We pray, as the one who taught us to pray, Our Father...

Offertory/Doxology/ Offertory Prayer

Holy God and author of our existence; our story is part of a greater story, and your hand is visible on every page and every scene. So too our stories cannot be disconnected from those in the past who have shaped the steps we take – saints and sinners, rebels and followers. They are part of our story as we are part of theirs. As we offer gifts this day, we pray they might be used to strengthen the story of faith that will be told by those who will come after we are gone. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen. (1 Peter 3:13-22)

Departing Hymn UMH 419 “I Am Thine, O Lord “

Author: Fanny J. Crosby (1875)

Publication Date: 1989

Tune Information

Composer: William H. Doane (1875)

**1. I am thine, O Lord, I have heard thy voice,
and it told thy love to me;
but I long to rise in the arms of faith
and be closer drawn to thee.**

Refrain:

**Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,
to the cross where thou hast died.
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,
to thy precious, bleeding side.**

**2. Consecrate me now to thy service, Lord,
by the power of grace divine;
let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,
and my will be lost in thine.**

(Refrain)

**3. O the pure delight of a single hour
that before thy throne I spend,
when I kneel in prayer, and with thee, my God,
I commune as friend with friend!**

(Refrain)

**4. There are depths of love that I cannot know
till I cross the narrow sea;
there are heights of joy that I may not reach
till I rest in peace with thee.**

(Refrain)

SENDING FORTH

Family of God, saved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ and baptized into new life, as you leave this place, consider: how will you remain ready to live out your testimony of the living hope of the resurrection with your family, your friends, and your neighbors? Amen.

Postlude