EPIPHANY
LUTHERAN CHURCH BASTROP

Connect. Grow. Multiply.

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Bastrop, TX 78602

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WELCOME TO EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH!

"How lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!" (Psalm 84:1) We are thankful that God has brought you here with us this morning to hear His Word and receive His gifts! You'll find everything you need for the worship service in this bulletin and in *Lutheran Service Book*, our hymnal. If you have any questions about our worship service, our congregation, or what we believe, please ask our pastor or any of our members.



OUR COMMUNION POLICY:

The Lord's Supper is celebrated at this congregation by baptized believers in the confession and glad confidence that, as he says, our Lord gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but his very body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with him and with one another. Our Lord invites to his table those who trust his words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as he forgives and loves us, that they may show forth his death until he comes.

If you are not a member of a congregation in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, and yet desire to receive Communion, we kindly request that you first speak with our pastor.

SERVANTS DURING WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

Pastor – Rev. E.B. Holschuh
Lay Reader – Deana Guetersloh-Hanson
Assisting Elder – Alex Monroe
Usher – Clayton Wolf
Acolyte – Calvin Monroe
Musicians – Faith Lutheran High School Choir and Handbells

We are using the Church Music Solutions Church Organist Service, an iPad application that provides us with accompaniment for our worship service. There is a brief introduction to the musical parts of the liturgy unless otherwise noted.

AS WE PREPARE FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

God's Gift of Forgiveness Engenders Our Forgiveness of Others

The Day of the Lord is *"near and hastening fast,"* and it will be *"a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation"* (Zeph. 1:14, 15). The Lord will search out and punish *"the men who are complacent"* concerning His Word, *"who fill their master's house with violence and fraud"* (Zeph. 1:9, 12). Then all their works and efforts will be for nothing: *"Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them"* (Zeph. 1:13). But those who fear, love and trust in the Lord are *"good and faithful"* stewards of His property (Matt. 25:21). They live by faith in His free gift of forgiveness, and they multiply His goods in the loving forgiveness of their neighbor, and *"the master of those servants"* settles His accounts with them by the gracious reckoning of His Gospel (Matt. 25:19). Likewise, *"God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thess. 5:9). Therefore, let us also *"put on the breastplate of faith and love"* in our dealings with one another (1 Thess. 5:8).

DIVINE SERVICE
SETTING FOUR

Prelude Selected Music

Welcome and Greeting Pastor

Announcements

Opening Hymn *"We Praise You, O God"* LSB 785

(stand)

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

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

P In the name of the Father and of the ✢ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C **Amen.** *Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]*
P Our help is in the name of the Lord,
C **who made heaven and earth**. *Psalm 124:8*
P If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. *Ps. 130:3-4*

P Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner. *[Luke 18:13]*

C Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

P Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen. *[John 20:19-23]*

SERVICE OF THE WORD

Introit Psalm 143:2, 5-6, 10-11

P Enter not into judgment with your servant,
for no one living is righteous before you.

**C I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done;
I ponder the work of your hands.**

P I stretch out my hands to you;
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.
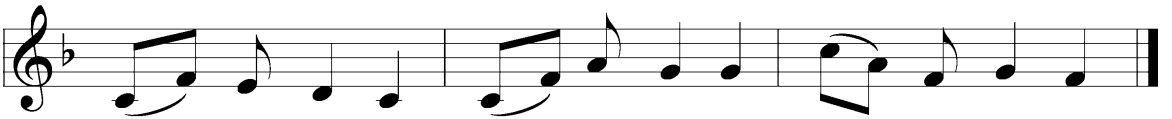
**C Teach me to do your will, for you are my God!
Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!**

P For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life!
In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!

**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.***

Kyrie
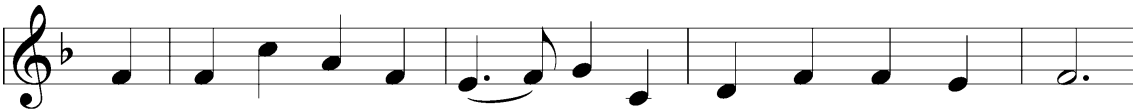
Mark 10:47
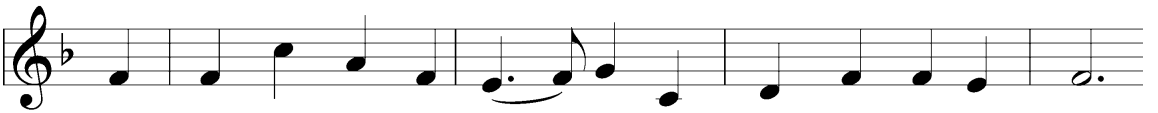


C Lord, have mer - cy; Christ, have mer - cy; Lord, have mer - cy.

Gloria in Excelsis (no intro)
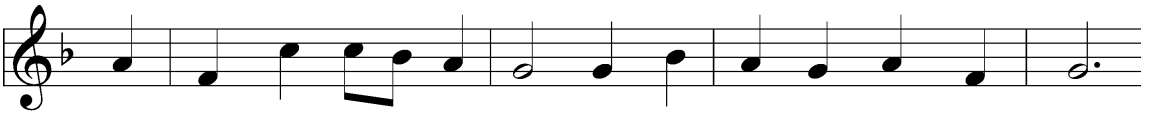
Luke 2:14; John 1:29
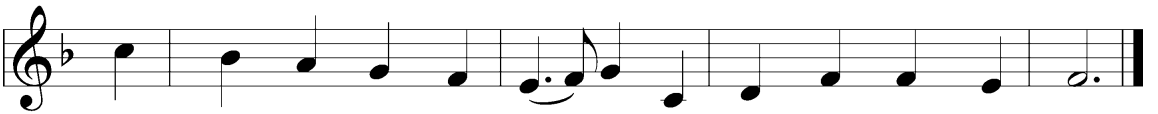


C 1 To God on high be glo - ry And peace to all the earth;
2 To You, O sole - be - got - ten, The Fa - ther's Son, we pray;
3 For You a - lone are ho - ly; You on - ly are the Lord.



Good - will from God in heav - en Pro - claimed at Je-sus' birth!
O Lamb of God, our Sav - ior, You take our sins a - way.
For - ev - er and for - ev - er, Be wor-shiped and a - dored;



We praise and bless You, Fa - ther; Your ho - ly name, we sing—
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus; Re - ceive our heart - felt cry,
You with the Ho - ly Spir - it A - lone are Lord Most High,



Our thanks for Your great glo - ry, Lord God, our heav'n - ly King.
Where You in pow'r are seat - ed At God's right hand on high—
In God the Fa - ther's glo - ry. "A - men!" our glad re - ply.

Salutation and Collect of the Day

P The Lord be with you. *2 Timothy 4:22*

C **And also with you.**

P Let us pray.

Almighty and ever-living God, You have given exceedingly great and precious promises to those who trust in You. Dispel from us the works of darkness and grant us to live in the light of Your Son, Jesus Christ, that our faith may never be found wanting; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

(sit)

Old Testament Reading

Zephaniah 1:7-16

7 Be silent before the Lord GOD!
For the day of the LORD is near;
the LORD has prepared a sacrifice
and consecrated his guests.
8 And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice—
"I will punish the officials and the king's sons
and all who array themselves in foreign attire.
9 On that day I will punish
everyone who leaps over the threshold,
and those who fill their master's house
with violence and fraud.
10 "On that day," declares the LORD,
"a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate,
a wail from the Second Quarter,
a loud crash from the hills.
11 Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar!
For all the traders are no more;
all who weigh out silver are cut off.
12 At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
and I will punish the men
who are complacent,
those who say in their hearts,
'The LORD will not do good,
nor will he do ill.'

13 Their goods shall be plundered,
and their houses laid waste.
Though they build houses,
they shall not inhabit them;
though they plant vineyards,
they shall not drink wine from them."
14 The great day of the LORD is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter;
the mighty man cries aloud there.
15 A day of wrath is that day,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
16 a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.

A This is the Word of the Lord.
C **Thanks be to God.**

Hymn *"Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus"* LSB 685

The choir will sing the first 2 stanzas.
Congregation, please join in on stanza 3 and 4.

Epistle Reading 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

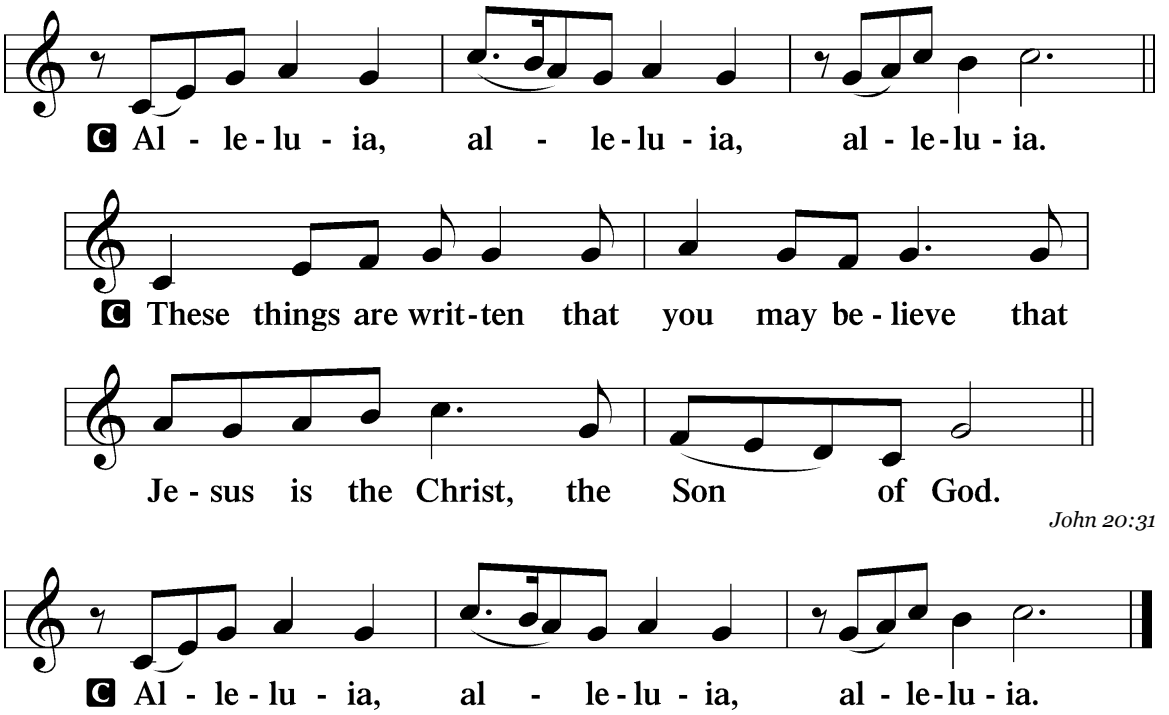
1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have
anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the
Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "There is peace
and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come
upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you are not in darkness,
brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light,
children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 So then let us not
sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7 For those who sleep,
sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8 But since we belong
to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for
a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to
obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether

we are awake or asleep we might live with him. [11]Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

A This is the Word of the Lord.
C **Thanks be to God.**

(stand)

Alleluia and Verse



Holy Gospel Reading Matthew 25:14-30

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the twenty-fifth chapter.
C **Glory to You, O Lord.**

[14][Jesus said:] "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. [15]To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. [16]He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them,

and he made five talents more. 17So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. 18But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. 19Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' 21His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' 22And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' 23His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' 24He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, 25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' 26But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed and gather where I scattered no seed? 27Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. 28So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. 29For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 30And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.
C **Praise to You, O Christ.**

(sit)

Hymn of the Day *"Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray"* LSB 663

Sermon *It's not how much, but how faithful…* Matthew 25:14-30

(stand)

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.

Passing of the Peace

(sit)

Prayer of the Church

P Lord, in Your mercy
C hear our prayer.

Offering Usher

FLHS Choir *"Amazing Grace"* *LSB 744*

(stand)

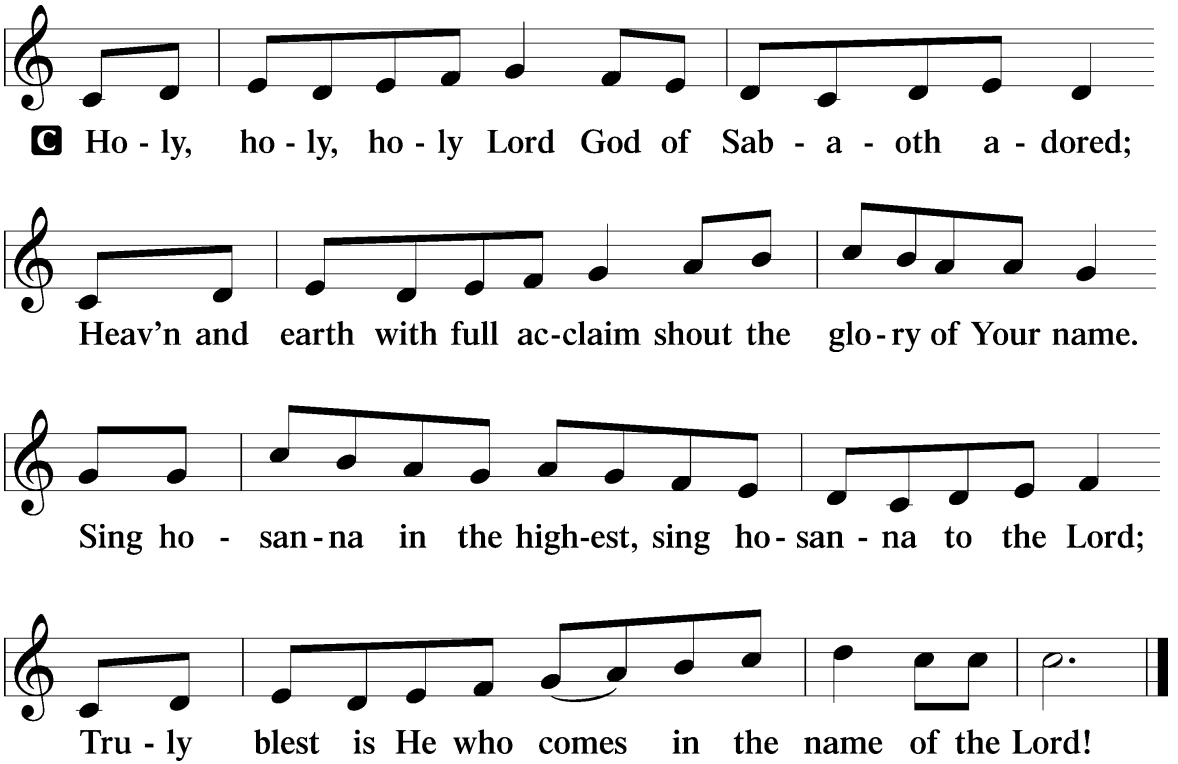
SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

Preface

P The Lord be with you. *2 Timothy 4:22*
C And also with you.
P Lift up your hearts.
C We lift them to the Lord. *[Colossians 3:1]*
P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
C It is right to give Him thanks and praise. *[Psalm 136]*

P It is truly good, 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, who, having created all things, took on human flesh and was born of the virgin Mary. For our sake He died on the cross and rose from the dead to put an end to death, thus fulfilling Your will and gaining for You a holy people. 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 (no intro) *Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9*



Prayer of Thanksgiving

P Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. By His death, He has redeemed us from bondage to sin and death, and by His resurrection, He has delivered us into new life in Him.

Grant us to keep the Feast in sincerity and truth, faithfully eating His body given into death and drinking His life's blood poured out for our salvation until we pass through death to the promised land of life eternal.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

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

The Words of Our Lord

Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24
Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

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."

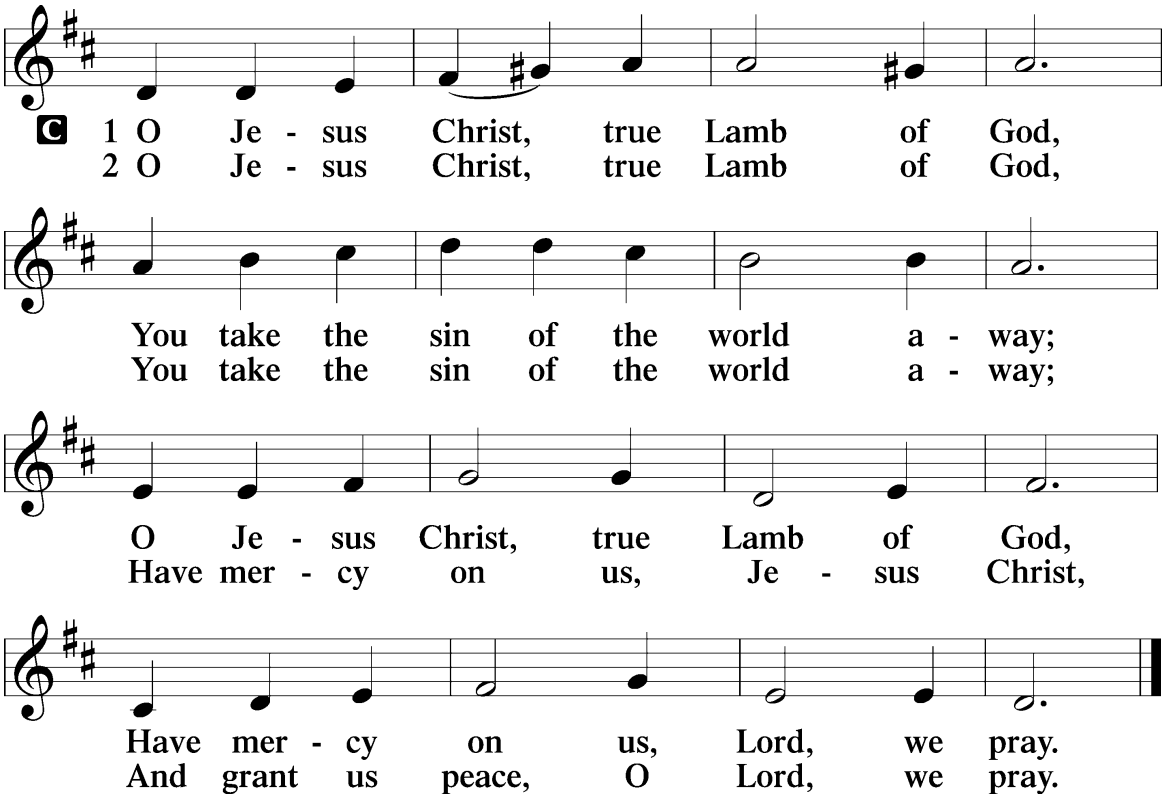
P In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new covenant in My ✢ blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Pax Domini

John 20:19

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.
C Amen.

Agnus Dei *John 1:29*



(sit)

FLHS Handbells *"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" arr. Douglas E. Wagner*
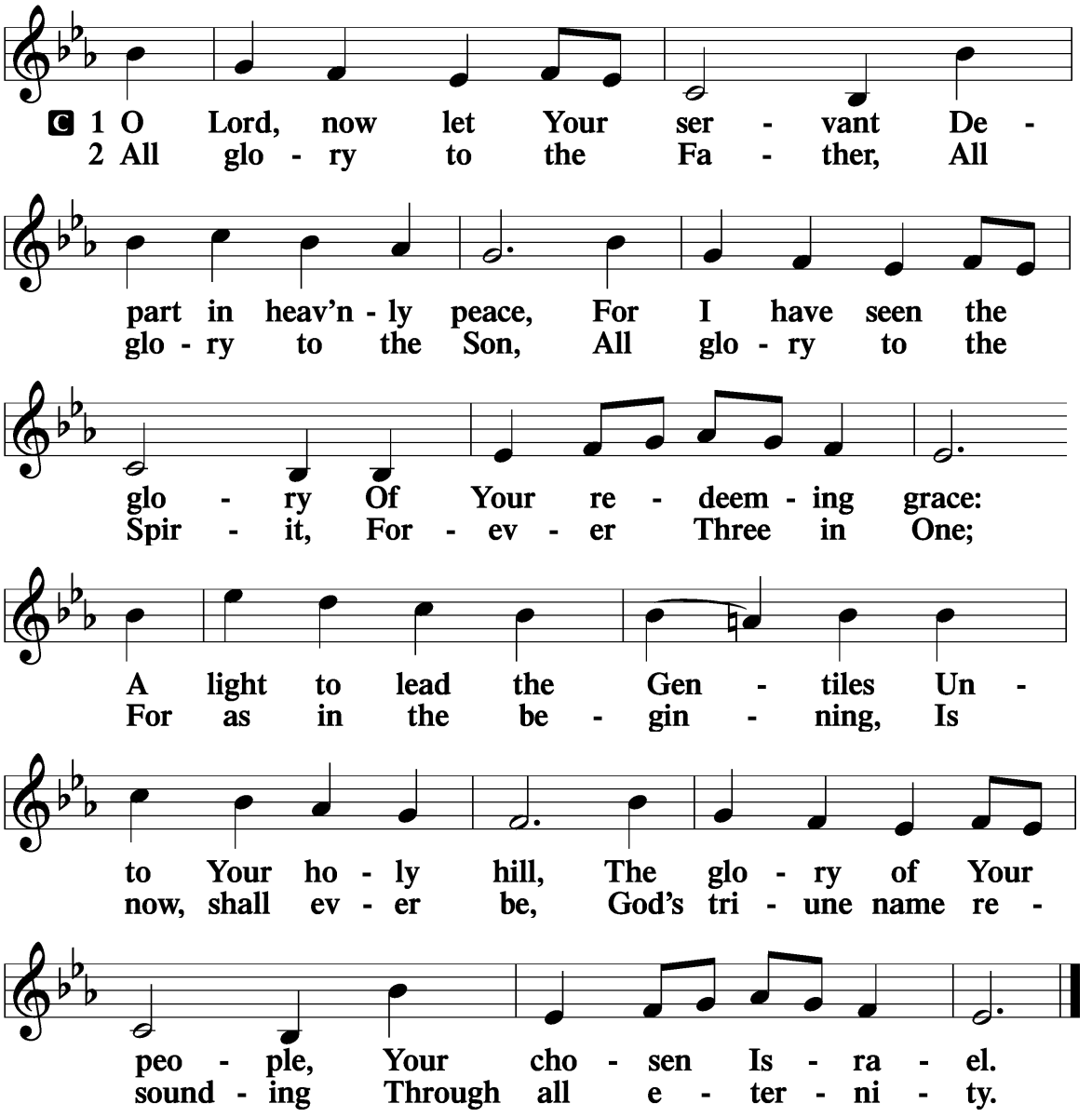
Distribution Hymn

"*Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*" LSB 621

(stand)

Nunc Dimittis

Luke 2:29-32



Post-Communion Collect

P 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.

C **Amen.**

Benedicamus and Benediction

P Let us bless the Lord. *[Psalm 103:1]*

C **Thanks be to God.**

P The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✢ give you peace. *Numbers 6:24-26*

C **Amen.**

(sit)

Closing Hymn "*Take My Life and Let It Be*" LSB 783

P Go in Peace!

C **Serve the Lord!**

Postlude Selected Music

Initial and ongoing funding for Epiphany Lutheran Church has been received through a grant made possible by the Roy D. and Ingaborg G. Randolph Memorial Endowment Fund.

SERMON NOTES: Matthew 25:14-30

It's not how much, but how faithful…

1. We are given uniquely different abilities, _____ of the _____ apportioned to each _____ of us as He determines.
2. The Parable of the Talents serves to remind Christians that God has bestowed various _____, and _____ in various measure, to _____.
3. Jesus is telling us in this parable that judgment will not be a question of how _____ or how _____, but how _____.
4. Christians are called to a life of self-abandon and witness, knowing that the _____ of _____ will more than compensate for any _____ we might make!
5. Each one of us is uniquely created and diversely gifted, part of a humanity in which the _____ of _____ were designed to complement those of _____.
6. We are called to respond to God's blessings in faith, with the certainty that God will provide—even when it looks like there's never enough _____, _____, or _____.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER?

The first step to becoming a member of our congregation is to speak with our pastor.

We believe, teach, and confess that we are all broken sinners in need of God's salvation, which He freely gives through His Word and Sacrament. Church is not a club for the sinless– it's a hospital for sinners!

You may become a member of Epiphany Lutheran Church by transferring your membership from a sister congregation of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) or you may receive instruction from the pastor and become a communicant member of Epiphany and the LCMS through Adult Instruction Class or through a profession of faith.

Epiphany Lutheran Church has a podcast! Our ***Peace Be With You*** podcast is available on popular podcast apps, but you can always find it at peacebewithyou.podbean.com (or just scan the QR code).

Epiphany Events Calendar: Our congregation calendar is on our website (epiphanybastrop.org); to add an event, please email secretary@epiphanybastrop.org.

Offering: Should you wish to make your regular tithe or offering online, you may do so at https://secure.myvanco.com/L-ZKYH/home or scan this QR code.

9am Adult Sunday School - Join us for *Gideon: There Is a Champion in You*, a study for anyone who has ever felt overwhelmed by chaos, trapped in insecurity, intimidated by opposition, or tempted to drift after success.

Wednesday 7pm Advent Worship Services – December 2, 9, & 16. Join us as we prepare for the birth of our Savior! (We will welcome the Newborn King on Christmas Eve – Join us at 7pm for a Candlelight Worship Service!)

A reminder that we have an **Online Epiphany Church Directory**. Go to members.InstantChurchDirectory.com and follow the prompts under "Sign In" to "Create a login now." Please remember, you must confirm your email address before you can sign in. There's also a free mobile app available—simply search for "Instant Church Directory" to get the download. You will need to use your email address as listed in our directory to create a log-in the first time you use the directory online and via the mobile app. If you need help or have questions, contact Tom Rosser.

Lutheran Radio: Hear The Lutheran Hour each Sunday on station KBUK-FM 104.9 at 7:00 a.m. or on station KANJ-FM 91.5 at 12:30 p.m. or go to **lhm.org** for a link to listen to the Lutheran Hour live. You can also listen to The Lutheran Hour on the local Austin station KLBJ (590 AM or 99.7 FM) at 7am on Sunday.

KFUO Radio, the broadcast voice of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, shares Christ for you anytime, anywhere on **KFUO.org** via worship services, Bible and theology studies, practical talk programs, and sacred music. Find programs on demand at **kfuo.org** and wherever you get your podcasts! Find us on social: **@KFUOradio** on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

RightNow Media: Every person in our Epiphany family has (and can share) free access to over 25,000 biblical video series for adults, youth, and kids—***RightNow Media*** has a free app that's available on all major streaming devices so you and your family can access content anywhere, anytime. Visit **app.rightnowmedia.org/join/elcb** or scan the QR code.

ChristianBook Giveback Program: Did you know that your purchases at Christianbook can help fund our congregation? Just visit christianbook.com/apps/giveback and enter the Giveback ID for Epiphany Lutheran Church: JQWHTN. After this one-time signup, we'll be eligible to receive 4% cashback on your purchases.

PRAYERS AT EPIPHANY

PRAYER REQUESTS: Please share any prayer request on the Prayer Requests sheet as you enter on Sunday. You may also email a prayer request, as well as a request to become a part of Epiphany's prayer chain, to secretary@epiphanybastrop.org.

Please continue to pray for…

- Abigail Young – missionary in the Dominican Republic
- Francis Eschberger, Elaine Ottinger, Gert Schriner, and all the residents at Argent Court Assisted Living in Bastrop

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THIS WEEK AT EPIPHANY:

Sunday, November 15th

- 9:00am – Children's Sunday School
- 9:00am – Adult Sunday School
- 10:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 10:30am – Worship Service with Communion

Tuesday, November 17th

- 7:00pm – Church Council Meeting

Thursday, November 19th

- 3:00pm – Devotional at Argent Court

Sunday, November 22nd

- 9:00am – Children's Sunday School
- 9:00am – Adult Sunday School
- 10:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 10:30am – Worship Service with Communion

FAITH LUTHERAN
HIGH SCHOOL OF CENTRAL TEXAS

Goings On at a Glance:
-Monday, November 16th - Booster's Meeting, 6pm
-Wednesday, November 18th - Early Dismissal (2:40pm) for Staff Meeting
- Thursday, November 19th - **Thanksgiving Chapel & Feast**

-Monday, November 23rd - Friday, November 27th - Thanksgiving Break

Thanksgiving Chapel and Feast
Please join us this **Thursday, November 19th,** beginning at **11:00 am** for our 10th Annual Thanksgiving Celebration. We will begin with a special chapel service, and then we encourage you to stay for our pot-luck Thanksgiving luncheon. It's the ultimate Friendsgiving fellowship and feast event!

Save the Date - Schmeckenfest
Thursday, December 3rd, make plans to stroll the square in La Grange from **5-8pm** for Schmeckenfest 2026. Faith will have our traditional booth with tasty eats and award winning wassail. Come enjoy the sights, sounds, and scents of the season!

Save the Date - Faith at Christmas
Mark your calendars for our annual Christmas concert on **Tuesday, December 8th at 7pm**. The program will include a collection of choir pieces, handbell pieces, hymns, scripture readings, and more. Refreshments will be served immediately following the program. Please join us! If you're unable, this event will be livestreamed on Facebook for your convenience.

It's the Most Wonderful Sound of the Year
Listen for "The Voice of FLHS" on KTIM, 89.1 FM, KNRG, 92.3 FM, and KBUK, 104.9 FM. We have transitioned to a holiday themed ad for the rest of 2026!

Faith on the Big Screen
Get to your theater a little early to catch our FLHS ad running before every movie in both Bastrop and Brenham! Our goal is to raise awareness and grow our wonderful school.

FAITH LUTHERAN
HIGH SCHOOL OF CENTRAL TEXAS

Follow Us On Social Media!

Keep up with all the exciting things happening here at FLHS. By following us on **Facebook and/or Instagram**, you'll be in the know and help Faith grow. Just click either icon on our website landing page to find us. Currently, we are showcasing Oktoberfest auction items each day at 5pm right up until the day of. Don't miss these sneak peeks!

Free Wednesday mornings?

Join us for our weekly Chapel Worship Service every Wednesday beginning at 11:05 am.

Thrivent Action Team Grants

Thrivent member? To supplement ongoing projects and activities at Faith, we ask those willing to submit an application for a $250 grant to contact Mrs. Nikki Kueck at (979) 242-2889 or kueckn@flhstx.org. Thank you for helping us access these additional funds!

Answers to Sermon Notes:
1. We are given uniquely different abilities, ***gifts*** of the ***Spirit*** apportioned to each ***one*** of us as He determines.
2. The Parable of the Talents serves to remind Christians that God has bestowed various ***gifts***, and ***gifts*** in various measure, to ***all***.
3. Jesus is telling us in this parable that judgment will not be a question of how ***much*** or how ***successful***, but how ***faithful***.
4. Christians are called to a life of self-abandon and witness, knowing that the ***grace*** of ***God*** will more than compensate for any ***mistakes*** we might make!
5. Each one of us is uniquely created and diversely gifted, part of a humanity in which the ***gifts*** of ***one*** were designed to complement those of ***another***.
6. We are called to respond to God's blessings in faith, with the certainty that God will provide—even when it looks like there's never enough ***time***...***ability***...or ***money***.



Buried Treasure or Living Faith?

In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30), Jesus tells of a master who entrusts his servants with considerable wealth before departing on a journey. Two servants put what they have received to work, doubling their master's investment. The third, afraid of losing what he has been given, buries it in the ground. When the master returns, he commends the first two servants but condemns the third.

Too often, Christians interpret this parable primarily as a lesson about financial responsibility. We reason that being faithful stewards means protecting what God has given us, avoiding unnecessary risks, and saving our resources for some future need. Churches can fall into the same trap, accumulating money while opportunities for ministry pass them by. We might call it a *save-money-for-Jesus* mentality. But is that really what Jesus is teaching?

The third servant wasn't condemned simply for burying his talent. He was condemned for his lack of faith! His actions revealed what he believed about his master. He saw him as harsh and demanding rather than generous and trustworthy. His fear exposed his unbelief. He returned every penny, yet his master called him "wicked and slothful." The issue wasn't ultimately financial failure, but a heart that did not trust the master.

And therein lies the lesson: How we use what God has entrusted to us is a confession of faith. Our stewardship reveals something about what we believe concerning God. Do we trust His promises and generosity, or do we live as though everything depends upon our ability to preserve what we have? Do we see God's gifts as opportunities to serve, or possessions to protect?

Jesus isn't offering investment advice. He's teaching us about faithfulness while we await His return. Everything we possess—our time, abilities, relationships, and financial resources—is entrusted to us by God. We are not owners but stewards, called to put His gifts to work in service to Him and our neighbors.

That's precisely what we mean at Epiphany by *Connect. Grow. Multiply.* God has connected us to Himself through Jesus Christ. In response, we reach beyond our comfort zones to connect others with the Good News. Through God's Word and Sacraments, the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith and equips us for service—spiritual growth isn't about accumulating religious knowledge for ourselves, but about being formed into disciples who live what they believe. And God's gifts are meant to bear fruit! We don't multiply the Church through our own cleverness or financial investments; God gives the growth through His Gospel.

Prudent saving certainly has its place in Christian stewardship. But there is a difference between saving responsibly for ministry and allowing fear to prevent ministry. The question, then, isn't simply how much we can save for Jesus. It's what our use of his gifts says about our faith in him. Are we burying what God has given us because we're afraid of losing it, or are we putting it to work because we trust the One who gave it?

And here's the wonderful Gospel truth: We don't put God's gifts to work to earn His approval. Through Christ's death and resurrection, we have already received the riches of His grace. Faith receives those gifts, and good works flow from that faith. Our stewardship doesn't save us; it bears witness to the Savior in whom we trust.

