

**THE
L O N G E S T
NIGHT**

a service of
rememberance,
consolation
& assurance

Reflection

The river takes the land, and leaves nothing.
Where the great slip gave way in the bank
and an acre disappeared, all human plans
dissolve. An awful clarification occurs
where a place was. Its memory breaks
from what is known now, begins to drift.
Where cattle grazed and trees stood, emptiness
widens the air for birdflight, wind, and rain.
As before the beginning, nothing is there.
Human wrong is in the cause, human
ruin in the effect—but no matter;
all will be lost, no matter the reason.
Nothing, having arrived, will stay.
The earth, even, is like a flower, so soon
passeth it away. And yet this nothing

is the seed of all—the clear eye
of Heaven, where all the worlds appear.
Where the imperfect has departed, the perfect
begins its struggle to return. The good gift
begins again its descent. The maker moves
in the unmade, stirring the water until
it clouds, dark beneath the surface,
stirring and darkening the soul until pain
perceives new possibility. There is nothing
to do but learn and wait, return to work
on what remains. Seed will sprout in the scar.
Though death is in the healing, it will heal.

- Wendell Berry
The Slip

Welcome

Psalm 85

Leader: Lord, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you covered all their sin. *Selah*
You withdrew all your wrath;
you turned from your hot anger.

**All: Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away your indignation toward us!
Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger to all generations?
Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your steadfast love, O Lord,
and grant us your salvation.**

Leader: Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;
but let them not turn back to folly.
Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
that glory may dwell in our land.

**All: Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs up from the ground,
and righteousness looks down from the sky.
Yes, the Lord will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness will go before him
and make his footsteps a way.**

Opening Hymn

Be Still, My Soul Katharina von Schelgel (1752), Page CXVI and David Wilton (2010)

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on your side.
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to your God to order and provide;
In every change, He will remain.

Be still, my soul: your God will undertake
To guide the future, as in ages past.
Your hope, your mind, your will let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright

Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's joys restored.

Scripture Reading

Psalm 80

- ¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock.
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.
- ² Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh,
stir up your might
and come to save us!
- ³ Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!
- ⁴ O Lord God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?
- ⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears
and given them tears to drink in full measure.
- ⁶ You make us an object of contention for our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh among themselves.
- ⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!
- ⁸ You brought a vine out of Egypt;
you drove out the nations and planted it.
- ⁹ You cleared the ground for it;
it took deep root and filled the land.
- ¹⁰ The mountains were covered with its shade,
the mighty cedars with its branches.
- ¹¹ It sent out its branches to the sea
and its shoots to the River.
- ¹² Why then have you broken down its walls,
so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit?
- ¹³ The boar from the forest ravages it,
and all that move in the field feed on it.
- ¹⁴ Turn again, O God of hosts!
Look down from heaven, and see;
have regard for this vine,
¹⁵ the stock that your right hand planted,
and for the son whom you made strong for yourself.

- ¹⁶ They have burned it with fire; they have cut it down;
may they perish at the rebuke of your face!
- ¹⁷ But let your hand be on the man of your right hand,
the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself!
- ¹⁸ Then we shall not turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call upon your name!
- ¹⁹ Restore us, O Lord God of hosts!
Let your face shine, that we may be saved!

Song of Lament

Come, Light Greg Thompson (2016)

Kindle the flint, the tinder; liven the hearth, the stone;
Shelter the dying lantern light, gladden the shadowed home.
Into this wilderness of shadows,
Come, Light original.

Answer our famine yearning, nourish our blighted fields;
Raise all our fallen storehouses, leaven the bitter yield.
Into this emptiness, this hunger,
Come, Bread all bountiful.

Out of the blowing starlessness, over the frozen sea,
Into our barren midnight, up from the fruitless trees, O come.

Loosen the cloaks of journeymen, mend all the broken roads;
Wake us from fitful forest sleep, lighten the lonely load.
Into this pilgrimage, this journey,
Come, Home perpetual.

Silent Prayer & Candle Lighting for ourselves, others, and the world

At this point, we will practice an extended time of silence. During this time, you are invited to come to the front of the room to light candles as visible signs of your prayers of remembrance and hope, for others, yourself, and our world. As you look at the flame of your candle focus on Christ, the Light of the World, and offer a silent prayer.

Homily

Todd Jones, *lead pastor*

Reflection

The inspiration for this hymn, like Horatio Spafford's "It is Well With my Soul," came out of tragedy and remorse. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, having an injured son and a dead wife, wrote his poem "Christmas Bells" on Christmas Day. The third verse, which says, "And in despair, I bowed my head: 'There is no peace on earth,' I said, 'For hate is strong and mocks the song Of peace on earth, good will to men,'" shows the depth of despair Longfellow experienced. The fourth verse shows the faith and hope in God that Longfellow had in the face of despair.

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1864) , John Baptiste Calkin (1872)

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play
And wild and sweet their songs repeat
Of peace on earth good will to men

I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along th'unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

But from a once lovely mouth
Contempt and pride came thundering out
And with the sound the carols drowned,
Peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head,
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong and it mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men."

Communion

What Is Communion?

What we do during communion isn't merely a symbolic act or a remembrance—it's more than that. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 teaches us that we are actually communing with Christ Himself as we partake of the elements. We mysteriously "participate in the body and blood" of Jesus. As we take communion, let us remember that Christ is spiritually present in a special way for us in this sacrament. The Lord's Supper is a means of grace, where we experience God's promise to provide for all our deepest needs.

If you are not a follower of Jesus or are not prepared to share in the meal, please feel free to not participate and instead spend this time in prayer ("Prayers for Reflection" are included below).

We hope this time is helpful to you as you consider your relationship with Jesus Christ and with his people, the church.

Prayers for Reflection

Prayer for those searching

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the way, the truth, and the life. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open me to the reality of who you are. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. Give me an understanding that is coherent, convincing, and that leads to the life you promise.

Prayer of belief

Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful I ever before believed, but through you, I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt, bearing my punishment on the cross, and offering forgiveness and new life. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as my Savior and my Lord.

Prayer for those struggling with sin

Lord Jesus, grant that I may see in you the fulfillment of all my need, and may turn from every false satisfaction to feed on you, the true and living bread. Enable me to lay aside the sin that clings so closely, and faithfully follow you in life.

Prayer for renewal and commitment

Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you in baptism, to love God and neighbor, and to a life of committed discipleship in your church. Grant that I may take the necessary steps to be one with your people, to pursue forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace, and to live in the fullness of your Spirit.

Song of Sending

Abide with Me Henry Lyte (1847) Justin Smith (2007)

Abide with me; falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers, fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, abide with me.

I need Thy presence, every passing hour.
What but Thy grace, can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless
Ills have no weight, tears lose their bitterness
Where is thy sting death? Where grave thy victory?
I triumph still, abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy cross, before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, Lord, abide with me.

Blessing and Sending

Minister: God of the watching ones,
the waiting ones,
the slow and suffering ones,
the angels in heaven,
the child in the womb,

**All: Give us your benediction,
your good word for our souls,
that we might rest and rise
in the kindness of your company. Amen.**

Minister: Go in peace.