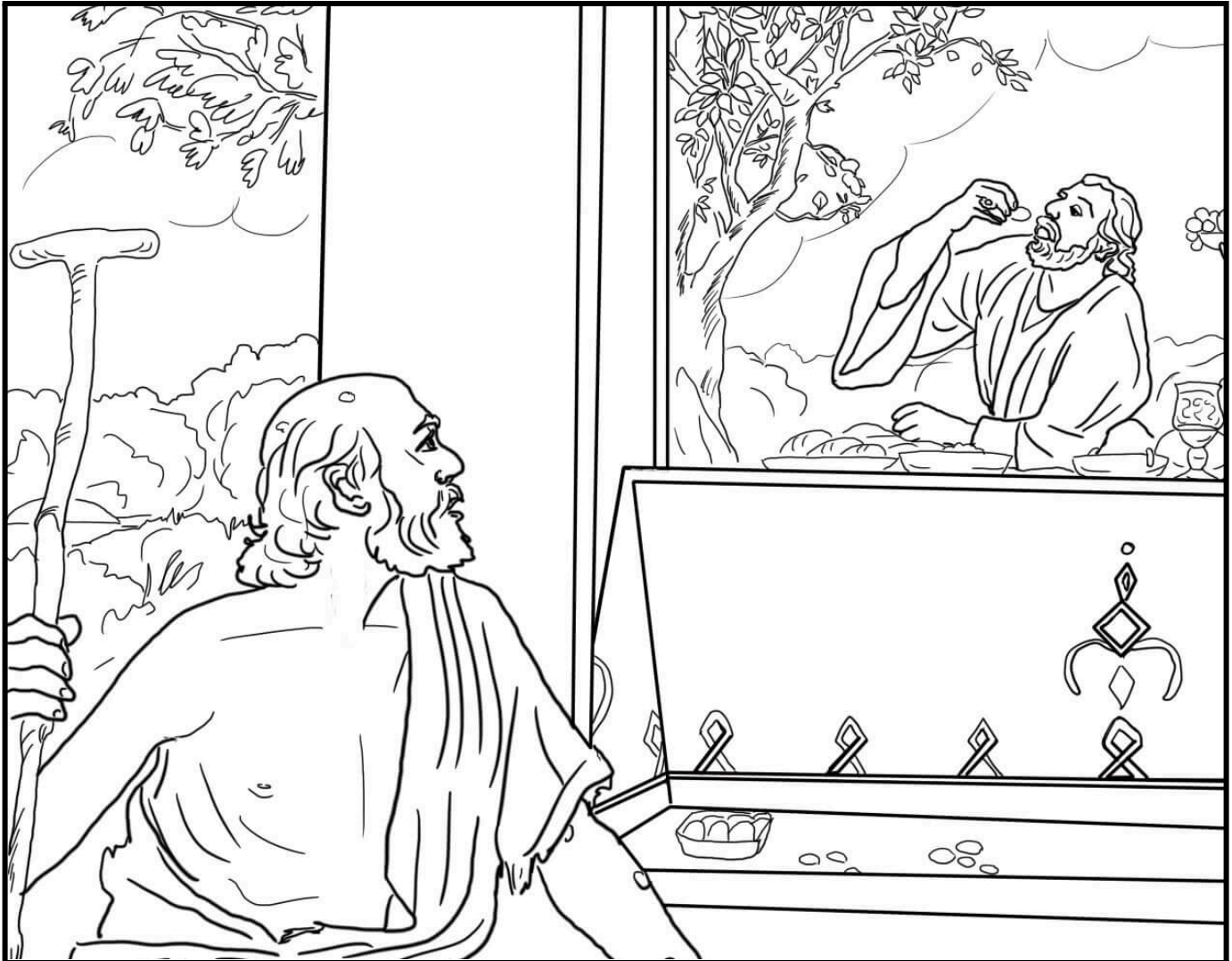




# TREE OF LIFE

## Christian Fellowship

“for Healing, Obedience, & Peace on Earth” (H.O.P.E.)



Lent III | 23 Mar 2025

**“You Cannot Serve Two Masters”**

**Luke 16:1-31**

# ✠ The Way of Jesus Liturgy ✠

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## Invocation

Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth, ♦ **you save us from our selfishness and make us your children through Baptism, Repentance, and Communion.** ♦ Through your Son Jesus, who is your Lamb and Word embodied in flesh, ♦ **we die to Civilization's Way of arrogance, fear, and violence.** ♦ Through your Holy Spirit, who dwells among us and within us, ♦ **we are reborn in Jesus's Way of faith, hope, and love.**

## Processional Song — *“When You Are Praying” (tune: LSB 744)*

- ♫ *“When you are praying,” Jesus said, “Don't put on vain displays — But close your door and speak your heart, And humbly offer praise.”* ♫
- ♫ *Our Father in the heavenly realm, Our Abba, ever near — Your name is holy, set apart; O bring your kingdom here!* ♫
- ♫ *God, give us all we daily need And we will be content; Forgive our sins as we forgive The wrongs that we resent.* ♫
- ♫ *God, give us grace to follow you; Protect us on your Way. When evil tempts us from your path, Deliver us, we pray.* ♫
- ♫ *O Lord, we turn in trust to you; You know the things we need — And like a parent, you so love: The ones who ask, receive.* ♫

## Lent Litany

The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, ♦ **blessed be the name of the Lord.**  
Naked we came from the earth's womb ♦ **and naked we will return there.**  
When a seed falls into the earth and dies, ♦ **then it produces much fruit.**  
Those who try to hold on to their lives, ♦ **remain prisoners of death.**  
But those who lose their lives for the Lord, ♦ **rise again to new life.**  
The rich, arrogant, and powerful ♦ **are torn down from their thrones.**  
But the poor, humble, and meek ♦ **inherit the whole earth.**

## Prayer of the Day

Jesus says, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there with them.”

(the Christ candle is lit to remind us that Jesus is coming among us)

♫ *O Christ, who called the twelve to rise and follow you, forsaking old, familiar ways for ventures bold and new: Grant us to hear your call to risk security and, bound in heart and will to you, find perfect liberty.* ♫ *O Christ, who led the twelve among the desolate and broke as bread of life for all your love compassionate: Lead us along the ways where hope has nearly died and help us climb the lonely hills where love is crucified.* ♫ (LSB 856)

The Lord Jesus be with you. ♦ **And also with you.** ♦ Let us pray. Heavenly Father, help us to stop serving money and serve you alone. In the name of Jesus, your Son, our Lord. ✠ **Amen.**

# † Baptism — The Way of Faith †

## Surrendering to the Creator

Jesus says, “If you hold onto your life, ♦ **you will destroy it.** ♦ But if you let go of your life, ♦ **you will save it.** ♦ You must be born again through water and the Spirit ♦ **to enter the Creator’s Kingdom.”** ♦ Father, Son, & Holy Spirit ♦ **I surrender to you all of my † mind, all of my † heart, and all of my † body and † soul.**

(we make the sign of the cross—touching forehead, heart, and shoulders)

Father, into your hands ♦ **I commit my spirit.** ♦ Father, not my will, ♦ **but your will be done.** ♪ *Take my life and all my heart, take my whole soul ev’ry part. Take my mouth and let it be, filled with your truth and mercy. ♪ Take my hands and let them love, with compassion from above. Take my feet and let them go, on the Way that Jesus showed. ♪ Take my money and fam’ly, give me faith and set me free. Take my life and teach me how to love all creation now. ♪ (LSB 783)*

## Listening to the Creator

Jesus says, “Come to me, all of you who are tired and burdened. Learn from me and practice my teachings and you will find rest for your souls. Those who listen will live.”

♪ *Listen to what Jesus teaches, listen to him every day. Listen as you walk and follow, listen also as you pray. Listen to him every moment, listen with an open mind. Listen to find peace and patience, listen so you will be kind. ♪ (LSB 770)*

## Remembering the Saints & Martyrs — Maximilian of Tebessa

Father, we give you thanks for the great cloud of saints and witnesses who have gone before us and have embodied the Way of Jesus. Today we remember Maximilian of Tebessa who was beheaded in 296 AD for refusing to serve in the Roman army because Jesus alone is Lord and then with his last act gave away his clothes to his executioner. Help us learn from his faith and example, † **Amen.**

## Chanted Psalm — *Psalm 119 Heth*



♪ *You deal with me, O Lord, | with your word.*

\* *Teach me discernment as I trust in | your commands.*

*Before I went astray, but now I | keep your word.*

\* *You are the only good, so teach | me your ways.*

*With all my heart I will walk in your | teachings.*

\* *The evil chase after wealth, but I | chase your law.*

*My struggles help teach me | your commands.*

\* *Your word is worth more than | all money. ♪*

## Law & Prophets — Ezekiel 22:6-16

The Prophets reading comes from Ezekiel 22. ♦ **Blessed are the ears that listen.**

We do not live on bread alone, ♦ **but on every word from the Lord.**

## Epistle — Colossians 1:1-14

The Epistle reading comes from Colossians 1. ♦ **Blessed are the ears that listen.**

We do not live on bread alone, ♦ **but on every word from the Lord.**

† Holy Gospel † — Luke 16:9-13

We stand for the word of Jesus. ♪ *If you lose your life for my sake, you will find it; if you want to save your life, let it go. Take up your cross, deny yourself. Come, follow me, follow me.* ♪ (tune: GC2 688)

The holy Gospel comes from Luke 16. ☩ **Jesus, we listen, ready to follow you.**

This is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. ☩ **We will trust and obey.**

## Message

### † Repentance — The Way of Hope †

#### Confronting Our Past

Jesus says, “I know everything you do. Pay attention and remove the log from your own eye. I have called you out of Civilization. Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!”

(silence for reflection)

For prostituting ourselves with the false lovers of self, family, and nation,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to love you with every thought, word, and deed.**

For trusting the technology and works of human hands,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to trust in your power alone.**

For being double-minded hypocrites who misrepresent your name,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to obediently live as your children.**

For overworking and oppressing land, animals, and each other,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to live in restful peace with all creation.**

For not respecting those you send to guide us and teach us,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to listen to our fathers and mothers in Christ.**

For being violent to our bodies and your creation,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to love all creation, including our enemies.**

For degrading ourselves and others with our sexuality,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to keep our sexuality within marriage.**

For trying to possess and control your creation,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to share everything we have.**

For not being vulnerable and honest with others,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to be truthful in all situations.**

For competing with others and desiring more than we need,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to be content in all circumstances.**

Father, turn us back to walking in your Spirit. ♪ *Lord Father we have wandered and hidden from your face. Rescue your whole creation with your almighty grace. From trust in wealth and weapons and blindness to your Way, save us and all creation with your own hands, we pray.* ♪ (LSB 449) Jesus says, “I discipline those I love. If you love your self, family, or nation more than me, you cannot be my disciple. Come out of Civilization, my people, so you will not share in its sicknesses. Not one stone will be left standing, it will all be torn down.” Will you turn away from Civilization’s Way of arrogance, fear, and violence and reaffirm your Baptism into Jesus’s Way of faith, hope, and love? ♦ **Yes, I renounce Civilization’s Way and pledge to follow Jesus.** ♦ Jesus

says, “Put your sword away. If you live by the sword, you will die by the sword. But if you forgive others, your heavenly Father will forgive you.” Will you release all debts and grudges that you hold against anyone—including every member of this church? ♦ **Yes, I forgive all those who have hurt me, frustrated me, or owe me anything.** ♦ Jesus says, “Your sins are forgiven. Get up and walk. Go and sin no more.” † Amen.

Song of the Day — “A Clever, Wise Steward” (tune: LSB 643)

- ♫ *A clever, wise steward found out he'd been fired; he thought, “I'm in trouble! Now what will I do? It's not very likely that I'll soon be hired, so I'll make a plan to get out of this stew.” He called up the people who owed his boss money; he settled their debts at deep discount that day. Those debtors were thrilled that their day had turned sunny; now they were indebted to him, in a way.* ♪
- ♫ *His boss heard what happened but did not reverse it; His debtors were praising him; what could he do? That boss seemed the hero; he'd make matters worse if he tried to collect from those debtors anew. He praised the shrewd worker — but not for deception; he praised him for wisdom — for knowing the score. He praised him for knowing that people could help him; when money was gone, he'd have what mattered more.* ♪
- ♫ *O Lord, we remember the things that you taught us: Though he had been fired, that worker was shrewd. He looked to change his course and he was relentless. He saw the big picture; he knew what was true. For money won't matter; it never can save us. Relationships matter when push comes to shove. May we as a church face the changes around us — Not trusting in money, but seeking to love.* ♪

Waiting on the Creator

- ♫ *Our Father, bring your Rule and will to earth. Give what we need for worry-free rebirth. Bring peace among us and forgive us too, as we forgive and love in all we do.*
- ♫ *Protect us from all things that will mislead. Keep us from selfishness, violence, and greed. We place our lives into your hands this day. Teach us to listen and to walk your Way. Amen.* ♪ (LSB 637)

(incense is lit to symbolize our prayers ascending to God and as its smell fills this space we are reminded of his presence among us)

Jesus says, “Learn from the birds. They do not store up for tomorrow and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Do not fear or worry about tomorrow. Seek only your Father's Kingdom and he will give you everything you need.”

*In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ **Lord have mercy.** ♫* Father, set us apart from Civilization in all our thoughts, words, and deeds. Take charge of our lives and all those in authority. Use everything that happens to bring your good judgment and healing upon all creation. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ **Lord have mercy.** ♫* Father, provide for us, protect us, and heal our brokenness. Especially this day we remember Charlene Sargent, John Espino, Cebra Sims, and those we name in our hearts... Father, give us exactly what we need this day and teach us to be content with that. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ **Lord have mercy.** ♫* Father, forgive us and free us from all that enslaves us. Help us to walk away from our anxieties, traumas, and addictions to Civilization's Way, so we may walk in Jesus's Way. Empower us to love and forgive everyone, even our enemies, in the way you have loved and forgiven us. *In peace, let us*

*pray to the Lord, ♪ Lord have mercy.* ♪ Father, humble us and remind us that we have no strength apart from you. Stay with us in difficult times and save us from our selfishness. Comfort us in the certain hope that all your creation and children will be renewed and raised from the dead. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♪ Lord have mercy.* ♪ Father, help us to let go and surrender everything into your loving hands, trusting that you work all things for the good of those who love you. **♦ Our Father in Heaven, may your name be holy, may your Kingdom come, and may your will be done—on Earth as in Heaven. Give us this day what we need for today. Forgive us in the same way that we forgive others. Do not abandon us when we are tempted, but pull us away from what is evil. For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours—now and forever. † Amen.**

## † Communion — The Way of Love †

### Sharing the Lord's Peace

Jesus says, “Make peace with each other **♦ before you come to the Lord's altar.** By this all people will know that you are my disciples: **♦ if you love each other.**”

### Offering & Musical Offering

Jesus says, “Do not store up things on earth. To be my disciple you must give up everything you own. Sell your possessions and give to the poor.” We offer all we have to the Lord, while also offering gifts to support this communion.

### Pledge of Allegiance

♪ *We come before you, Lord, to bow. We lay our lives at your feet now. All things are yours, we own nothing! Our lives are in your hands this day. Give what we need, O Lord, we pray. Please protect us, provide for us! Watch over us, ever with us, always love us!* ♪ (LSB 816) Jesus says, “If you pledge your allegiance to me before others, then I will pledge my allegiance to you before my heavenly Father.”

**♦ I pledge allegiance to one God, the all-powerful Father, who is the Creator of Heaven and Earth, of all things visible and invisible.**

**♦ I pledge allegiance to one Lord, Jesus Christ, who is God's only Son. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He loved and he suffered. Under Pontius Pilate, he was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day he was raised from the dead. He ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. He is coming to judge the living and the dead. His Kingdom will not end.**

**♦ I pledge allegiance to the Holy Spirit, who is the giver of life, the holy universal Church, the communion of saints, the baptism for forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life in the age to come. † Amen.**

### Thanksgiving — Ευχαριστία

Let us give thanks to our Creator! **♦ It is right to give him thanks and praise!**

Father, we praise and thank you, **♦ for you provide, protect, love, and renew us and all creation!** ♦ We are grateful for all that you give, especially for... Father, we thank you for marrying yourself to us and uniting Heaven and Earth, Spirit and Flesh, and Christ and the Church through your Son Jesus!

*♫ Lord Jesus, think on me, amid struggle and strife. In all my pain and misery, please be my health and life. ♫ Lord Jesus, think on me, that when the flood is past, I may a new creation be, and walk with you steadfast. ♫ (LSB 610)*

### † Words of Our Lord Jesus †

On the night before our Lord Jesus was crucified, he revealed his Way of rescuing all creation from the Way of Civilization. Before supper, Jesus humbly washed the feet of his students and enemies. Jesus said, ♦ **“Follow my example. Love each other, even your enemies, in the same way I have loved you.”** ♦ During supper, Jesus then took the bread and broke it. He gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is being given for you. Do the same for each other in my memory.” After supper, Jesus then took the cup and gave thanks. He said, “This is my blood which is being shed for you, for the forgiveness of all of your sin. Do the same for each other in my memory.”

*♫ Oh come Lord Jesus come and dine and give yourself through bread and wine. Feed us so we may have new birth, and bring your rule ov'r all the earth. Come now, come now! Our Lord Jesus and bring your healing love to us! ♫ (LSB 357)*

### Sharing the Bread & Wine

Jesus says, “I am the bread of life. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood is united with me and will be raised from the dead.” As we feed on the Bread of Heaven ♦ **we are made members of Christ’s Body.** ♦ We no longer live for ourselves ♦ **but Christ lives within us.** ♦ We invite all Baptized members of the holy universal Church, who give their undivided allegiance to Jesus and are at peace with their brothers and sisters in Christ, to join us ♦ **as the Creator’s Lamb mysteriously gives himself to us in, with, and under this bread, wine, and communion.**

*♫ When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride. ♫ Were the whole realm of creation mine, that would be a gift far too small. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. ♫ (LSB 425)*

### Recessional Song — “A Rich Man Cried Out” (tune: LSB 717)

- ♫ A rich man cried out, who was lost, “If only I had known the cost, then I would have stopped all my greed and shared my things with those in need! But now I’m dead, it is too late, I can’t repent and change my fate!” ♫*
- ♫ Outside my gate, outside my door, is someone there who’s lost or poor? Is someone there I do not see, that I walk by, who has a need? Is there a child who longs for care? An older friend who needs a prayer? ♫*
- ♫ Outside our church, is someone near who cries in pain, who lives in fear? Is someone close who has no way to buy the food she needs this day? Someone who seeks a helping hand? A refugee new to this land? ♫*
- ♫ Some gates are made of wood or stone, And some are made of sin alone. Some doors are made of greed and pride; they also keep the poor outside. As we look out, Christ, may we see our common, shared humanity. ♫*

### Agáπη Feast & Text Discussion

Jesus says, “Do you love me? Then feed my sheep.” We now move to our Bible study

room to continue devoting ourselves ♦ “to the Apostles’ teaching, to communion with each other, to the sharing of bread, and to prayer.”

Sent to “Do the Same in My Memory”

Christ Jesus, you are the Lamb, who has laid down your body and blood for us, ♦ **help us to be lambs who do the same for each other in your memory.** † Amen.

Jesus says, “Go and live this truth: ♦ **The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!** ♦ Heal the sick, raise the dead, ♦ **cleanse the unclean, and cast out evil spirits.** ♦ Freely you have received from the Creator, ♦ **now freely you must give.** ♦ I am sending you like lambs among wolves, ♦ **but do not fear, take up your cross and follow me.**”

♫ *Go to dark Gethsemane, you who feel the tempter’s pow’r. Your Lord Jesus’ conflict see, watch with him one painful hour. Shun not suff’ring, shame or loss, learn from him to bear your cross. ♫ To his cross go make your climb, there to worship at his feet. It is here his kingdom’s time, his self-sacrifice complete. “God forgive them,” hear his cry; learn from Jesus Christ to die. ♫ (LSB 436)*

Blessing

Jesus says, “Blessed are you in your poverty and suffering, for you are in the Creator’s Kingdom. Blessed are you in your humility, for you will inherit the earth. Blessed are you when you are merciful and peaceful, for you will find mercy and peace.” † Amen.

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- \* Faith & Film: “Tree of Life” (Mar 24) | “Oculus” (Mar 31, Apr 7) | “Hacksaw Ridge” (Apr 14, 21) | “Motorcycle Diaries” (Apr 28, May 5)
  - \* “40 Days of Walking the Way”: Wednesdays in Lent @ 6:00 pm, Mar 26, Apr 2, 9
  - \* Holy Week: **Maundy Thursday** — Apr 17, 6:00 pm (potluck) @ DG  
**Good Friday** — Apr 18, 6:00 pm  
**Holy Saturday** — Apr 19, 6:00 pm @ DG
  - \* Growing in H.O.P.E.: Wednesdays @ DG, 5:30 pm food/fellowship, 6:00 pm study  
**Sickness & Healing**: Apr 23, 30, May 7 (potluck)  
**Soup & Psalms**: May 14, 21, 28, Jun 4 (potluck)

Weekly Calendar   March 23 - 30, 2025		
Sun, Mar 23	9:30 am	Liturgy & Αγάπη Feast   Luke 16:1-31
Mon, Mar 24	6:00 pm	Faith & Film
Wed, Mar 26	6:00 pm	“40 Days of Walking the Way”
Sat, Mar 29	7-9 am	Breakfast & Devotion
Sun, Mar 30	9:30 am	Liturgy & Αγάπη Feast   Luke 17:1-37

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