

## Order of Worship for February 4, 2024

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

**Opening Hymn:** “*Greet the Rising Sun*” – **Hymn #871** (from China)

### Confessing our sins and receiving God’s forgiveness

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

C: **Amen. Lord God, we confess that we often are closed to the concerns of others. We are busy with what we feel we have to do. We center on our own problems. We avoid many opportunities we have to befriend people who are different from us. By our actions and even more by what we fail to do, we cloud people from seeing Your love which You made visible to us in Jesus, who died on the cross for all people. Almighty Father, forgive us for Jesus’ sake!**

P: Christ Jesus died for all. The love we fail to show He poured out for all of us by His sacrifice on the cross. By the command of the Lord Jesus I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

### Service of the Word

#### **Entrance Psalm:**

P: I will sing to the LORD,

C: **because He has dealt bountifully with me.**

P: Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;

C: **light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,**

P: lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,”

C: **lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.**

P: But I have trusted in Your steadfast love;

C: **my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.**

**ALL: 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.**

P: I will sing to the LORD,

C: **because He has dealt bountifully with me.**

**Choir Anthem:** “*All Glory Be to God on High*”- arr. Schroeter (8:30 AM)

#### **Old Testament Lesson:** Isaiah 40:21-31

R: Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

“To whom then will you compare Me, that I should be like him?” says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God”? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might He increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

R: This is the Word of our Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Epistle Lesson:** 1 Corinthians 9:16-27

R: For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

R: This is the Word of our Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Hymn of Praise:** “*Allabare*”- **Hymn #799** (from Argentina)

**The Holy Gospel:** Mark 1:29-39

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the first chapter

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

P: And immediately Jesus left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told Jesus about her. And He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening at sundown they brought to Him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at

the door. And Jesus healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And He would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew Him. And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus departed and went out to a desolate place, and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him, and they found Him and said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” And He said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” And Jesus went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

**C: Praise to You, O Christ**

**Sermon Hymn:** “*On Eagle’s Wings*” - Hymn #727

**Sermon:** “*Ends of the Earth*”- **Isaiah 40:21-31**

“I believe God made me for a purpose. But he also made me fast,” Eric Liddell wrote in a letter to his sister Jenny before competing as a sprinter for Great Britain in the 1924 Summer Olympics, 100 years ago. That calling he felt to run led to conflict. His sister thought he was wasting his life pursuing competitive running. But his calling would lead him to take actions that would show the importance of his Christian faith in a way that wouldn’t be forgotten.

Liddell had trained to run the 100 meter race. But when he found out that the opening heats would be run on a Sunday, he withdrew. Instead, he ran the 400 meters, a race that he’d never run before in international competition. Despite that change, he won the gold medal in that race. His success and willingness to sacrifice for his beliefs inspired many, and became the source for the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire*.

That wasn’t the end of the story, though. Liddell was the son of Scottish missionaries and had been born in China. He returned there in 1925, and spent much of the rest of his life in China, serving the poor and teaching the gospel. During World War II, Liddell was taken prisoner by Japanese forces and devoted the last two years of his life to ministering to his fellow inmates at the internment camp. He died just a few months short of the camp’s liberation by American forces.

During one of the climactic scenes of *Chariots of Fire*, Liddell quotes from this passage from Isaiah. The appeal to knowing that they shall run and not grow weary certainly would have appealed to someone who spent so much time running and competing. But, too, the promise from Isaiah to a people far from home, reminding them that God was with them to the ends of the earth, would have appealed to a missionary kid who would again be far from home.

Today’s reading from Isaiah reminds us of that. Isaiah is talking to a beaten, broken down people. Discouraged and depressed. In 587 BC the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and take the people away into exile and captivity. Far from home, they wondered if they’d been abandoned by God. Far from home, they were weary and worn, wondering how they would go on.

Isaiah gives them a message of hope. “Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:30).

He points them to the eagle. It was a familiar image to them. In the Exodus, God told them “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself” (Exodus 19:4). Eagles and other birds were familiar sights, and they knew how an eagle flew.

It's important that Isaiah points to the eagle. Isaiah doesn't point them to hummingbirds, constantly flapping their wings and flitting from flower to flower. Isaiah doesn't point them to the duck, which looks calm on the surface but is paddling up a storm underneath the surface. Isaiah doesn't point them to a vulture, which is attracted to dead and dying things. He doesn't point them to the peacock, which spends all of its time primping and preening itself. Isaiah points them to the eagle.

Eagles don't just fly. They soar. They rarely flap their wings. One researcher notes that eagles flap their wings less than two minutes an hour. The rest of the time, eagles soar. They don't stay aloft by their own efforts. They couldn't. The amount of exertion they would have to do to stay aloft by their own efforts is impossible to maintain. They are dependent on the thermals, the wind rising from below, to keep them in flight.

When a storm hits an eagle, it initially appears as though the storm's fury is going to crush the bird against a rocky cliff. The eagle, however, faces the storm, tilts his wings at the proper angle, and slowly the fury that might have crushed him begins to drive him upward. Soon he is rising above the storm. What's true of eagles can be true for us. The power that looks to destroy us is the same power that we rise to new heights.

That's why Isaiah points them to the eagle. Like an eagle, they are to wait for the wind to blow. The wind blowing from God, the one who is in control of the wind and the waves, the stars and the sky. The wind that will blow them back to the promised land, back home, back to freedom. They would wait for that wind, but even after their return from exile, they stop letting the wind blow them. They put all of their efforts into raising themselves up, instead of letting the wind of God keep them aloft.

Then something new blows into the world. The one who created the wind and the waves, the one who the wind and the waves obeyed, came into the world. In Jesus, God came into the world to bring again that good news of God's grace. The good news that, like an eagle in flight, we are carried along by God. And when we are weary and worn, tired of flapping our wings and trying to stay aloft on our own, we need to just spread our wings and trust in God.

And this is where we get a brief vocabulary lesson. Spirit and breath and wind are the same word in Hebrew, ruach. That's also true in Greek, with the word pneuma, the source of English words like pneumatic. And that can get confusing in some passages, when we can wonder or look from English translation to English translation and see if something is translated wind or breath or spirit. But it also reminds us that the spirit of God is what brings life. It also reminds us that when we talk about the wind holding eagles aloft, we can think of the Holy Spirit keeping us in flight as we soar like eagles, dependent on where the wind is blowing.

That's why we pray for missionaries as we do every week, as they go where the Spirit is

blowing, and are dependent on God to keep them going. If you asked any of the missionaries we pray for every week; Kebede and his family in Ethiopia, the Grulkes in Botswana, the Clausings and Tiffany Smith in Tanzania, and the Hansons in South Korea, they'd probably tell you the same thing. They can only do what they do because God is with them.

As we look to see where God is at work in the world, where Jesus is going on his mission, where the Holy Spirit is moving in the hearts and lives of others, we see that things are already happening. It's not dependent on us. We get invited to join in.

We may not be able to run fast enough to break Olympic records. We may not travel overseas to be missionaries. But we know that the God who watched the eagles watches over us, and keeps us soaring. God will renew our strength when we are weary. That's good news.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Article of Creed and Explanation:**

#### **The Prayer for Mission to All People:**

P: Lord, we pray that You will open our eyes to see how we can witness to the many people You have gathered here in our community from all over the world. Give us the attitude of Abraham who welcomed strangers into his tent with the words: (Genesis 18:4-5).

**C: "Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed."**

P: We thank You for Your mercy which extends to all people, for You reach out to all the world with Your Kingdom as Jesus told us: (Luke 13:29).

**C: "People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the Kingdom of God."**

P: Help us to see that the good news of Jesus is for all people and all cultures as Peter discovered when You sent him to Cornelius: (Acts 10:34-35).

**C: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts people from every nation who fear Him and do what is right."**

P: Help us to be a part of how You break down the barriers that divide us through the unifying message of Jesus: (Romans 10:12).

**C: "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all."**

P: Give us the courage of the young Hebrew slave girl who pointed her sick master Naaman, general of the Syrian army, to Your prophet with the words: (2 Kings 5:3).

**C: "If only my master would see the prophet Elisha who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."**

P: Grant us the patience and the understanding to try to understand the many people in our community who are from different countries and cultures, so that we have the attitude of St. Paul who said: (1 Corinthians 9:22-23).

**C: "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings."**

*(The pastor will continue with other petitions)*

P: Make us thankful for the wonderful opportunities You give us to share our faith with people from all over the world so that we can join the hymn of praise: (Philippians 2:10-11).

C: **“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Amen.**

**Sharing Our Ministry:**

**Offering-voluntary:**

### Service of the Sacrament

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and proper so to do.**

**Hymn:** *“Come, Let Us Eat”* – **Hymn # 626** (sung with leader) (from Kenya)

**The Words of our Lord:**

**Lord’s Prayer:**

**Distribution:** *“When I Behold Jesus Christ”* - **Hymn #542** (from Ethiopia),  
*“Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia”* - **Hymn #466** (from Tanzania)

**The Closing Prayer:**

**ALL:** Grant, O Lord, that the lips which have sung Your praise in the sanctuary may glorify You in the world, and that the tongues which have confessed Your name may ever speak the truth. Then we, with all whom You have made clean through this pure and holy sacrament, will recount Your mighty miracles, proclaiming them freely-- spreading Your word to the whole world: "You are the Lord forevermore!" In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Christ commanded us:** (spoken in various languages) “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, And behold I am with you all the days, even to the ends of the earth.”

**Blessing:** (Pastor)

C: **Amen.**

**Closing Hymn:** *“Listen, God is Calling”* - **Hymn #833** (from Kenya)

**Postlude**