

***"Do Not Be Afraid. I Am The First And The Last, The Living One."
By Rudolf Schärer***

OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH

5000 W. Tidwell, Houston, TX 77091 • 713-290-9087 • www.OSL.cc

Rev. Steven Cholak, Officiating • Jeff Armstrong, Organist

COVER ILLUSTRATION – “I Am the First and the Last” by Dr. Rudolf Schäfer presents the awesome vision of our Lord Jesus as He revealed himself to the apostle John in the opening scene of the Book of Revelation. There Christ was standing amid the seven golden lamps which signified the church. Schäfer captures the essence of the vision as Christ upon the cross, shedding His precious blood to win forgiveness for the sins of mankind, dominates the entire image. Our Lord’s humble entrance into this world as the Babe of Bethlehem is shown in the left foreground. A joyful choir of angels proclaims the Christmas gospel above the stable and a gleaming star announces the Savior’s birth. In the right foreground stands the empty tomb with its resplendent guardian angel so that all might know that Jesus has conquered death for us. The beautiful life promise of the rainbow extends from the cross to the open door of the tomb. The risen Lord walks in the nearby garden behind the tomb awaiting the arrival of the women. The angels ascending from the empty tomb are carrying home the life harvest of God’s people. Over all is the extended hand of God the Father surrounded by the countless hosts of heaven, prophets and apostles, faithful men and women of God (including Martin Luther), those who have already received their share of God’s gracious gift of eternal life. Schäfer painted this masterpiece for the altar of the village church in Oberjesigen, Germany.

*A Service of Thanksgiving
Celebrating God's Gift of Eternal Life For*



*Jennifer "Jenn" Clarke Nesrsta
June 15, 1983 - December 28, 2023*

*The death of a Christian has been transformed from tragedy into victory by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At the moment of physical death the soul of the believer is safe at home in heaven with their Lord. Therefore, it is fitting and proper that those who remain - for a time - here on earth, would gather to celebrate God's gift of life and savor the memories of blessings received through our beloved who now lives with Christ in heaven. We affirm the faith in which they lived and through which they have been given eternal life in the sanctuary where they received the forgiveness of sins in Word and sacrament. **"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."** (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)*

Opening Hymn

In the Garden

Text: C. Austin Miles; Tune: "Garden"



1. I come to the gar - den a - lone, While the
2. He speaks, and the sound of His voice Is so
3. I'd stay in the gar - den with Him Though the



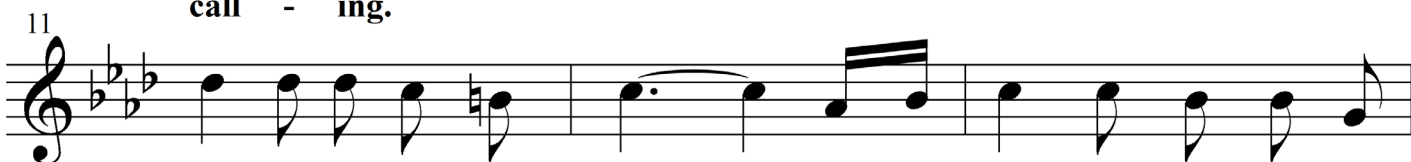
dew is still on the ros - es; And the
sweet the birds hush their sing - ing, And the
night a - round me be fall - ing, But He



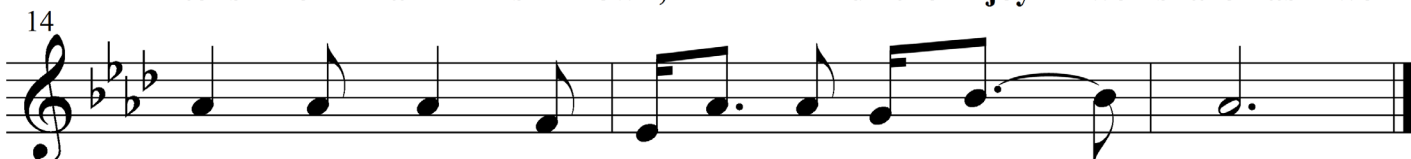
voice I hear, fall - ing on my ear, The Son of God dis -
mel - o - dy that He gave to me With - in my heart is
bids me go; through the voice of woe, His voice to me is



clos - es. And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He
ring - ing.
call - ing.



tells me I am His own; And the joy we share as we



tar - ry there, None oth - er has ev - er known.

Invocation

Opening Prayers



Scripture Readings

Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.

The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Come, behold the works of the Lord,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the chariots with fire.

“Be still, and know that I am God.

I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Epistle

Philippians 3:8–14

[8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ [9] and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— [10] that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, [11] that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. [12] Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. [13] Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, [14] I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel

St. John 11:20–27

[20] So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. [21] Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. [22] But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” [23] Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” [24] Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” [25] Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” [27] She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C *Thanks be to God.*



Sermon Hymn

How Great Thou Art

Text: Carl Gustaf Boberg; Tune: Swedish – “O Store Gud”; LSB #801 © 2006 CPH



1 O Lord my God, when I in awe-some won - der Con - sid - er
2 When through the woods and for - est glades I wan - der, I hear the
3 But when I think that God, His Son not spar - ing, Sent Him to
4 When Christ shall come with shout of ac - cla - ma - tion And take me



all the works Thy hand hath made, I see the stars, I hear the might - y
birds sing sweet - ly in the trees; When I look down from loft - y moun - tain
die, I scarce can take it in— That on the cross my bur - den glad - ly
home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in hum - ble ad - o -



thun - der, Thy pow'r through - out the u - ni - verse dis - played;
gran - deur And hear the brook and feel the gen - tle breeze;
bear - ing He bled and died to take a - way my sin;
ra - tion And there pro - claim: “My God, how great Thou art!”



Then sings my soul, my Sav - ior God, to Thee, How great Thou



art! How great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Sav - ior God, to



Thee, How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

Sermon

There is no more poignant or powerful opportunity for the proclamation of the Biblical message of Law and Gospel than the moments in which Christians celebrate the home-going of a loved one to eternal life in the mansions of heaven. The funeral sermon is designed to declare that wondrous Gospel and to set before all present this day the truth that every believer is a sinner saved by grace alone. Salvation cannot be earned. It can only be given as a free gift by the God whose love for us moved Him to give His only Son to die in our place upon the cross so that we might live with Him forever.

Obituary

Jennifer Nesrsta

Jennifer “Jenn” (Clarke) Nesrsta, 40, of Hempstead, TX, passed away on December 28, 2023, after a courageous 3-year battle with Stage 4 breast cancer. She was born on June 15, 1983, in Syracuse, NY. She was a single, loving mother of three who was full of life, loved the beach, camping, fishing and had a fierce love for her children. She was a force to be reckoned with even until the end.

Jenn is survived by her children, Devin Deverso (19), Sophia Deverso (17), and Alyssa LeCompte (13). She is also survived by her parents, Janet Williams (Erik), Brian Clarke (Barbara Prucha), sister, Stephanie Washo, step-brother, Kyle Williams (Alisha), step-sisters, Susanna Bormioli Weber (Filippo) and Caterina Bormioli, several aunts, uncles and cousins. She was preceded in death by her maternal and paternal grandparents. Jenn will be deeply missed by her family and friends.



A memorial service to celebrate Jenn’s life will be held at Our Savior Lutheran Church, 5000 W Tidwell Rd, Houston, TX 77091, on Friday, January 5th at 4:00 pm. Please join us in remembering and honoring Jenn’s life. In lieu of flowers please donate to the Susan G. Komen in Jenn’s memory, or the GoFundMe that will be set up at a later date for the benefit of Jenn’s children. A celebration of life will be held in Syracuse in July.

Prayers



The Lord's Prayer

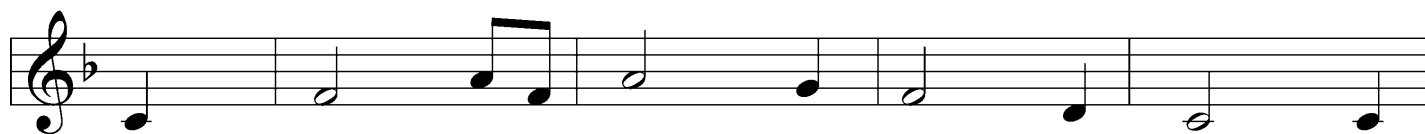
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

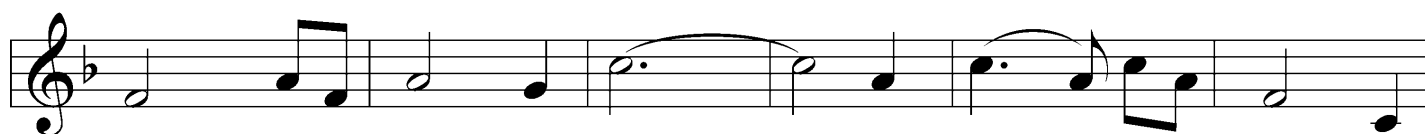
Closing Hymn

Amazing Grace

Text: John Newton; Tune: "New Britain"; LSB #744 © 2006 CPH



1 A - maz - ing grace— how sweet the sound— That
2 The Lord has prom - ised good to me, His
3 Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares I
4 Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail And
5 When we've been there ten thou - sand years, Bright

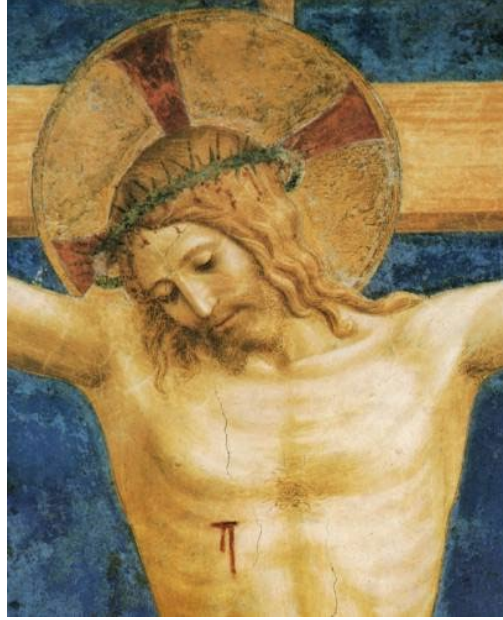


saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but
Word my hope se - cures; He will my shield and
have al - read - y come; His grace has brought me
mor - tal life shall cease, A - maz - ing grace shall
shin - ing as the sun, We've no less days to



now am found, Was blind but now I see!
por - tion be As long as life en - dures.
safe thus far, His grace will lead me home.
then pre - vail In heav - en's joy and peace.
sing God's praise Than when we'd first be - gun.

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Soli Deo Gloria