

Between Cross and Resurrection

La Sierra University Church of Seventh-day Adventists • Riverside, California • March 22, 2008

Preparing

Before the service begins, you are invited to reflect on these sentences from the Gospel according to John, and on the subsequent comment adapted from Alan E. Lewis:

There was a garden at the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed. (John 19:41-20:1)

But what about the Sabbath, the day between that afternoon and that morning, over which the storyteller passes so quickly? Faith's supreme drama tells of three days that form the center and the turning point of history. Yet, ironically, the center of the drama itself is an empty

space. All the action and emotion, it seems, belong to two days only: despair and joy, dark and light, defeat and victory, evenly distributed in vivid contrast between what humanity did to Jesus on the first and what God did for him on the third.

Or does the precise locus of this day between cross and resurrection, its very uniqueness as the one moment in history which is both after Good Friday and before Easter, invest it with special meaning, a distinct identity, and the most revealing light? Might not the midway interval, at the heart of the unfolding story provide an excellent vantage point from which to observe the drama, understand its actors, and interpret its import? The nonevent of the middle day could after all be a significant zero, a pregnant emptiness, a silent nothing which says everything.

Inviting

The pastoral host says:

The infinite love of the Creator,
the grace of Christ our Savior,
and the presence of the Holy Spirit
are with each of you today.

Please join in reading the bold type:

And also with you.

*The pastor expresses our shared concerns
as a community of faith and then says:*

For Christians around the world, this is the day
between the cross and the resurrection.
It is the day between intense emotions—
the grief of Jesus' death,
and the joy of his resurrection.

In between these great emotions
we have an opportunity to ponder
the extraordinary significance of these events.
In profound gratitude
let us make the most of this opportunity today.

*Where possible, please stand and join the cantor in singing
three stanzas of hymn 155:*

**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.**

**Since I, who was undone and lost,
Have pardon through his name and word,
Forbid it, then, that I should boast
Save in the cross of Christ my Lord.**

**Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all.**

Please be seated.

Praying

The service leader leads the congregation in prayer:

Creating God, you love in total freedom
and from all eternity have chosen us
to be your creatures and your partners.

**In majestic humility and mighty vulnerability
you have made our humanity your own.**

In Jesus of Nazareth you came closer to us
than we are to ourselves.

**You became even more like us
even though we are so different from you.**

In Jesus, rejected by his own people,
and destroyed by law, religion, and politics,

**you lived our life, died our death,
and occupied our grave.**

God Incarnate, between your dying and rising
you lay in a tomb.

**You were cursed by our sin
and devastated by our perishing.**

You suffered all our agonies of pain
and judgment and abandonment.

**You felt the power of the evil one
who holds us in the grip of fear and guilt,
and holds our world in bondage
to injustice and death.**

For us you gave up your life in your Son,
an intrinsic part of your divine selfhood.

You surrendered yourself to death.

You added to our tears of shame,
bewilderment, and rage
your own infinity of broken-heartedness—

**because of the tragic, proud estrangement
of your children,
the wasteful corruption
of your magnificent creation.**

God the Spirit, for us you held together
the forsaking Father and the forsaken Son
with unifying, resurrecting bonds of love,

**while death's hostility,
the hatred of a crooked universe,
tore the divine reality asunder.**

God the Three-in One, whose unity
is the oneness of Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit,

**across the abyss of separation
in the cross and the grave
you have reconciled the world to yourself
and swallowed up our death.**

God with us in the grave,
you have thus removed the sting of death,

**and promised in your final kingdom
an even greater victory
of abundant grace and life.**

Amen.

The cantor sings this stanza to the tune of hymn 156:

O sacred head, now wounded,
with grief and shame weighed down,
now scornfully surrounded
with thorns, your only crown.
How pale you are with anguish,
with sore abuse and scorn!
How does your visage languish
which once with bright as morn!

Please join the cantor in singing another stanza:

**What language shall we borrow
to thank you, dearest Friend,
for this your dying sorrow,
your pity without end?
May we be yours forever,
and though our days be few,
O Savior, let us never
outlive our love to you!**

The service leader says:

Although we have promised
to serve your will and live your love,

**too often we have served ourselves
and lived for our own benefit.**

Yet even now we hear your gracious forgiveness
in Jesus words, "I don't condemn you either."
So not in guilt,

nor in seeking for a heavenly reward,
but in gratefulness for your incomparable love,

we reaffirm our commitment to you.

*After several moments of silent reflection,
the service leader may remind the congregation of
special blessings, needs, and concerns, and then says:*

I invite you to kneel as we pray.

Let us each pray to experience forgiveness
for the sin that remains in our lives.

O God, hear our prayer.

Please pray in silence.

Let us each pray for the willingness to give to others
the forgiveness we ourselves have received
from you in the death of Jesus.

O God, hear our prayer.

Please pray in silence.

Let us each pray for the insight to recognize
the possibilities of resurrection in our own lives.

O God, hear our prayer.

Please pray in silence.

Let us each pray for grace to bring resurrection life
to someone else in the coming week.

O God, hear our prayer.

Please pray in silence.

Now let us pray together the prayer Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come and your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from the evil one.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours now and forever.
Amen.**

Please be seated.

Listening

The first reader prays.

Listen for God's word to you in the words of
the Jeremiah, chapter 31, verses 1-6.

After the reading:

This ends the reading.

Thanks be to God for these words.

After a period of silence the pastor says:

Please join in reading responsively
from Psalm 118, as printed on the sheet
you received with your worship folder.

*After the responsive reading and a period of silence
the second reader says:*

Listen for God's word to you in the words of
Paul to the Colossians, chapter 3, verses 1-4.

After the reading:

This ends the reading.

Thanks be to God for these words.

*After a period of silence, the cantor sings two stanzas
to the tune of hymn 158:*

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when he rose up from the dead?
Were you there when he rose up from the dead?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.

Were you there when he rose up from the dead?

The service leader says:

I invite you to stand to hear the Gospel.

Hear the gospel of Jesus Christ according to John,
chapter 20, verses 1-18.

After the reading:

The gospel of Jesus Christ!

Thanks be to God for the gospel.

Please be seated.

Giving

The service leader says:

Because we want to share God's grace with others,
we bring our tithes and offerings.

After the offering is received, the cantor says:

I invite you to stand and sing hymn 166,
"Christ the Lord Is Risen Today, Alleluia!"

After the hymn, please remain standing.

Considering

The homilist prays:

Nourish us today with your Word, O God,
so that we may bear witness to your forgiving love
and your resurrection power.

Amen.

Please be seated.

*The homilist briefly expounds the meaning of one or more
of the scripture readings.*

Affirming

The service leader says:

I invite you to stand as we affirm our faith.

We believe in God, Maker of heaven and earth.

**God is almighty in love,
unwilling ever to abandon sinners.**

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's unique Son,

**He was born of Mary, grew to adulthood,
and went about doing good
and preaching the gospel.**

He suffered, died, was buried, and
came forth from the tomb on the third day.
He ascended into heaven, to the right hand of God,
and is now ministering on our behalf.

**He will come again in glory
as Judge and Savior of all humanity.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit, giver of life.

**The Spirit is God's guiding presence
and transforming power,**

The Spirit is the source of our oneness in Christ,
and the possibility of our witness and service,

**The Spirit is the promise of everlasting life
in the presence of God.**

*Please remain standing and join the cantor
in singing this stanza to the tune of hymn 167:*

**Alleluia! Gracious Jesus!
Yours the scepter, yours the throne.
Alleluia! Yours the triumph,
Yours the victory alone!
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion
Thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus, out of every nation
You've redeemed us by your blood.**

Please remain standing.

Blessing

The pastor says:

Knowing that you belong to God,
clothe yourselves with compassion, and generosity.
Forgive others as God has forgiven you,
and serve every day in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Knowing that resurrection life
is possible for you now,
let its power encompass all you are and do,
so that in the end you will recognize it
as a country you have already entered
and in whose joy you have already lived.

Amen.

After the organ chimes, please be seated.

Reflecting

*Please remain in silent, prayerful reflection
until the conclusion of the postlude.*

The pastor says:

Go and live to the glory of your Creator,
in the name of Jesus Christ your Savior,
and by the power of the Spirit
your Guiding Presence.

Alleluia! Amen!

Acknowledgment

In addition to various traditional and contemporary resources for worship, this liturgy draws extensively from Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

Scripture Readings for Coming Sabbaths

Between Cross and Resurrection

March 22 Jeremiah 31:1-6 *Psalm 118:1-2,14-24* Colossians 3:1-4 John 20:1-18

Resurrection Life (Easter Season)

March 29 Acts 2:14a,22-32 *Psalm 16* 1 Peter 1:3-9 John 20:19-31
April 5 Acts 2:14a,36-41 *Psalm 116:1-4,12-19* 1 Peter 1:17-23 Luke 24:13-32,45-54
April 12 Acts 2:42-47 *Psalm 23* 1 Peter 2:19-25 John 10:1-10
April 19 Acts 7:55-60 *Psalm 31:1-6,15-16* 1 Peter 2:2-10 John 14:1-10
April 26 Acts 17:22-31 *Psalm 86:8-20* 1 Peter 3:123-22` John 14:15-21
May 3 Acts 1:6-14 *Psalm 68:1-10,32-35* 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:61-11 John 17:1-11

Pentecost Sabbath

May 10 Numbers 11:24-30 *Psalm 104:24-34,35b* Acts 2:1-21 John 7:37-39