

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 9:1–4

¹There will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

- ² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.
- ³ You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
- ⁴ For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:10–18

¹⁰I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. ¹¹For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. ¹²What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." ¹³Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

¹⁸For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Holy Gospel: Matthew 4:12–25

¹²When [Jesus] heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

- ¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
- ¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

¹⁸While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

²³And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. ²⁵And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.



About the Cover: The stark light of Epiphany cuts through the darkness to show us our Savior. Paradoxically, the darkness of Good Friday is but a shadow cast by the life-giving words of our Lord from His cross. Out of God's love for His people stumbling in the darkness of sin, He has given the light of salvation in His radiant love.



The people
who walked
in darkness
have seen
a great light

Isaiah 9:2

St. John's Lutheran Church (LCMS)
8948 N 1900 Ave Geneseo, IL 61254
309-949-2516

January 22, 2023 Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Office of Matins (Lutheran Service Book, pg. 219)

Hymn of Invocation 398 Hail to the Lord's Anointed

Opening Versicles (Common, p. 219)

Venite (p. 220)

Psalm 27:1-9

¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

²**When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries
and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.**

³Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

⁴**One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my
life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in
his temple.**

⁵For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will
conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon
a rock.

⁶**And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all
around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts
of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.**

⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud;
be gracious to me and answer me!

⁸**You have said, "Seek my face."
My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek."**

⁹Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in
anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake
me not, O God of my salvation!

**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.**

Office Hymn 412 The People That In Darkness Sat

Readings (on back of bulletin)

Responsory (Common, p. 221)

Sermon

Te Deum (p. 223)

Prayer for Presenting the Offering

Kyrie (p. 227)

Collect of the Day

P Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our
infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal
and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God,
now and forever.

G Amen.

Prayer of the Church

After each petition:

P let us pray to the Lord:

G Lord, have mercy.

The prayer concludes:

P ...one God, now and forever.

G Amen.

Benediction (p. 228)

Closing Hymn 839 O Christ, Our True and Only Light

Silent Prayer

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH-LCMS

churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org
Website: www.stjohnsgeneseo.org
https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo

**HEARING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE
HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE**

Rev. Timothy Nerud **Pastor**
309-949-2516 (Office), 612-940-8138 (Cell), 309-949-2517 (Home)

Elder: Carl Freeman

Organist: Gail Tutt

Greeter: Janet Bertsons

Videographers: Joel Werling, Nicole Nerud, or Heidi Nerud

Today's Readings: Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Holy Gospel: Matthew 4:12-25

WE PRAY: Holy and blessed Trinity, who though three Persons are one God, be in the midst of Your holy people that our unity in diversity may be the distinguishing mark of our common loyalty to You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit are one God with dominion over us forever. Amen

WELCOME TO ALL!

We are anxious to share with you the Christ-centered ministry at St. John's. Our Liturgy follows closely the pattern of Word and Lord's Supper handed down from the ancient Church. It is our hope that you will make the Church's life of prayer your own. If you have difficulty following our order of service, please ask someone sitting near you for assistance. We pray that you will receive rich spiritual blessings from your presence here. May the peace and power of our risen Christ be yours always.

IF YOU DESIRE, a visit or call from Pastor Nerud, please contact the church office (309-949-2516).

OFFICE HOURS

Terri's hours (Monday—Friday) 8 am—12 pm
Pastor's hours (Monday, Pastor's day off)
(Tuesday) 9 am—12 pm
(Thursday) 9 am—12 pm & 1 pm—4 pm
(Wednesday & Friday) please call ahead.

STREAM SERVICES <https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/> and on the website: www.stjohnsgeneseo.org.

All bulletin announcements need to be in the Office by Wednesday mornings.

ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY

Sunday school—6 Adult Bible Class—11 Worship—49

OFFERING

Offering last Sunday \$2,677.00
Weekly income needed per 2023 Budget \$4,212.60

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES AT ST JOHN'S

Today	8:45 am	SS/ Adult & Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship
	11:00 am	Quarterly Voters' Assembly
Tuesday	6:00 pm	Adult Instruction class
Wednesday	5:00 pm	Confirmation class
	7:00 pm	SS Teachers' meeting
Next Sunday	8:45 am	SS/ Adult & Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship/Holy Communion

*I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD."
Psalms 122:1*

MATTHEW 4:20 – "Immediately they left their nets and followed him." Discipleship cost Peter and Andrew everything they had. They left their trade, their hometown, their families, and they followed Jesus. God has called us to the same discipleship, the same devotion, though the exact details of how that is lived out will vary. The important thing is this: we know that all we have is the Lord's, to be used for His purpose. We are His disciples and are ready to follow where He leads.

ATTENDANCE PADS are at the end of each pew. Each family (members and guests) should sign using only **ONE** box per household, naming all family members present in the one box. **EVERYONE** needs to indicate their intention to receive Holy Communion on a Communion Sunday. Return pad to the right end of your pew. Thanks for your help with this.

QUARTERY VOTERS' ASSEMBLY is today immediately after the worship service. We pray all will see the importance of your active participation in the business of this congregation and stay for this meeting.

DOLLARS FOR MISSION—One dollar each week to be added to the many other dollars given, multiplying a small gift into a might amount. Your gift will spread the Gospel far and wide. Thank you for your gift.

TERRI will be out of the Office this week.

ALTAR FLOWERS—The new flower chart is on the bulletin board. Please consider providing flowers for a Sunday. Sign the chart and put your money in a yellow envelope. The rest will be done for you. Thank you.

CHRISTIAN LIVING—Matthew 4:12-25: God keeps calling and our calling

is to keep witnessing. God called to Adam and Eve in the cool of the afternoon; Ezekiel by the river Chebar; Isaiah in the temple; Samuel while he slept; and Peter, James and John while they were fishing. From God's call comes His direction, guidance, correction, instruction, enlightenment, loving relationships, new missions, acts of care and fellowship bearing His name. So we pray: God, keep calling. Help me to hear Your call. Please don't ever quit calling just because I don't answer, or when I'm slow to respond or when obedience to Your call involves discomfort or trouble. God's call means so much to our witness in this life and for eternity. We belong to Him. We have life now and for eternity through Him. And because of His calling, our life and witness have significance. So, God keep calling - and we'll witness always!

PRAYER MINISTRY

Give thanks as you pray:

MISSION—*Pray that God would raise up more missionaries to serve at home and abroad, according to His will.*

ST JOHN'S—Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Miller—We offer before You our common request for the well-being of Your church throughout the world that it may be so guided and governed by Your good Spirit that all who profess themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit in the bond of peace, and the righteousness of life. Specifically, we pray for Nick, Kristen, Mackenzie, and Bailey and ask Your blessings upon them.

ST. JOHN'S FAMILY—O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body. We pray that You would show mercy to Your servants:

Elizabeth Bjork	Betty Firch	Jessica Johnson
Paula Chapa	Arlyn Helke	Drew Schillinger
Jim Dahl	Lynne Johnson	Marilyn Woods

Lois Esterlein

Anthony/Sami Sedotto (2022/2023 Adopted seminary student)

Andrew/Sarah Hill & family (2022/23 seminary student)

Don Eggers (son of friend of Marilyn Woods)

Jodi Martins (daughter of Gary & Darla Johns)

Jon/Anita Clausing (missionaries in Kenya)

Marilyn Potts (wife of Cal Potts, former St. John Laborer for Christ)

Rev. Justin Kane (son of Sandra Kane)

Laurie Sanford (sister of Jan Dahl)

Susan Mayden (sister of Michele Barry)

Russ Klavon (brother of Carolyn Werner)

MILITARY—We pray for those serving in our military and their families:

Mandy/Richard Davila (daughter/son-in-law of Linda Aper)

Luke/Nicole Thompson (son/daughter-in-law of John/Kindra Thompson)

Karl Flynn (son of Mr/Mrs Paul Flynn)

Zachary/Tiffany Gardner (nephew/wife of Lois Esterlein)

Casey Powers Jr. (step son of Lisa Powers)

Brittany Loenser (daughter of Gabe Loenser)

LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

“When someone struggles with the overwhelming guilt of a past sin, like abortion, repentance and reconciliation are the only source of relief. There is hope! ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (1 John 1:9). Through all our days, the Lord never leaves us nor forsakes us. He is a patient God, waiting and wanting all to come to repentance and be saved.” *Deaconess Pamela Buhler and Deaconess Chrissie Gillet, Word of Hope – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

NOW OPEN, SWADDLING CLOTHES @ Concordia Lutheran Church, Geneseo. This is a mission of Concordia, created as a place for moms and moms-to-be find some help gathering all the items needed for a new bundle of joy. (We are also here to help dads, custodial grandparents, and foster parents). Our free shopping room is open every 2nd Thursday from 4-7 pm and every 4th Saturday from 9 am-noon. Tell anyone who maybe in need of this help. Concordia is at 316 S. Oakwood Ave, Geneseo. For more information call, 309-944-3993 or visit www.swaddlingclothes.org.

CAMP CILCA is already planning for next season's summer camps. Early Bird registration is underway. Brochures are in the mailbox of families with children. Additional brochures can be found on the counter between the mailboxes. Scholarships are available from both St. John's and Camp CILCA.

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

January 22, 2023

Text: Isaiah 9:1-4 (Old Testament)

Other Texts: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 (Epistle); Matthew 4:12-25 (Gospel Reading)

“The Invader”

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father through faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.¹

Our Old Testament Reading begins with these words, promising there would be no gloom for she who was in anguish, a reference to the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. To begin, what is this land? It is actually a portion of the Promised Land. It was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob over a thousand years before Isaiah’s prophecy and, after God delivered Israel from Egypt through Moses, this land was then conquered under Joshua about 650 years before Isaiah’s prophecy, the actual action of the Conquest of Canaan being recorded in the Book of Joshua.

However, another important, though much less exciting event recorded in Joshua is the apportioning of the land to the tribes of Israel. And two of those tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali, named after the two of Jacob’s sons who were the tribes’ founders, were allotted neighboring lands in the northern part of Israel. While not one-to-one, think of these two tribes’ lands like Minnesota and North Dakota, both in the north of the country, sharing a border with each other and, more importantly, bordering the lands outside of the nation, again like Minnesota and North Dakota border Canada.

Zebulun and Naphtali were beautiful and fertile areas in ancient Israel. However, their being in the northern most part of the land also made them susceptible to invasion from the north since the natural barriers of Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River on the east funneled invaders to enter through these lands. And so, because of geography, the land of Zebulun and Naphtali were perpetually on the front lines of war and bloodshed.

In fact, at the time of Isaiah’s prophecy which we heard this morning, the Assyrians were in the process of conquering the Zebulun and Naphtali. And within a few years, the entire land of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, of which Zebulun and Naphtali were a part, would be totally conquered by Assyrian and the remaining Southern Kingdom of Judah would be under assault, the only thing stopping their destruction being God’s miraculous intervention, when He sent a holy angel who killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night.²

Thus Isaiah rightly identifies Zebulun and Naphtali as a land upon which the Lord brought contempt. They were a constantly attacked and conquered people. With the Assyrian conquest many of the Israelite natives were removed from the land and those from other lands which

Assyria had conquered elsewhere were brought in to settle Zebulun and Naphtali. Militarily, this made it less likely that the people would revolt as they did not share a common ancestry, national loyalty, or a religious faith. And so the people of this land were burdened, beaten, and battered, being in such bad shape that just a few verses earlier Isaiah called them a land without dawn, of great distress and darkness, covered with the gloom of anguish.³

But never forget; this was not the mere chance of history, nothing more than politics of the day. Such were in play, but they were played by the One whose providence controls nature and nations and all of history. Played in this way by God because Israel had abandoned Him, falling into idolatry and all manner of sins. So Zebulun and Naphtali were not merely a land of contempt in the eyes of the world, but also in the eyes of heaven as God unleashed the covenant curses upon His rebellious people. Curses He had declared at the time of Moses. Curses He had warned the people of time and time again through the prophets He had sent. Curses and warnings which the people ignored, did not believe and so did not fear, for they were trapped in the gloom of spiritual darkness, living in impenitence, hard-heartedness, and love of sin.

And it is to these people, trapped in hopelessness, that Isaiah speaks a word of hope. And not just a, “Gee, it’ll be a bit better,” but a complete reversal, where the land of contempt will be made glorious! How will this happen? Clearly it is not something the people could do; people who are dominated in their bodies, dominated in their souls. No. God must be the one to do it. And He will do it by another “invader.” And just two verses after our Old Testament Reading, Isaiah names this “invader” and, as he does such, he gives the reason for hope.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.⁴

Thus God’s “invader” is not an army from the north, but one Man who comes from heaven itself, comes first as a Child, born of the Virgin. The Child who is Immanuel, “God with us,”⁵ for He is God’s incarnate eternal Son, Jesus Christ. And how different this “invasion” is!

Jesus takes no hostages, plunders no food, and sheds no blood, except of course His own. Instead His invasion is one of words, through His preaching and teaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”⁶ It is this man—and the beautiful saving Gospel He speaks—who is the great light that shines upon this land of gloom and darkness. For Jesus did not come to plunder and to enslave the people, but instead to plunder Satan’s kingdom and so free those enslaved to him because of their sin. And the more Jesus preaches, teaches, and works His miracles, the brighter the light of redemption shines forth. Thus St. Matthew records the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in today’s Gospel as we heard, and the land once held in contempt is glorified as people, instead of fleeing it, flow into it to be rescued by the “Heavenly Invader.”

So it is that as the light of Jesus increases, the true source of the darkness was increasingly exposed. While the wicked conquerors from the north were terrible, they were never the real threat for they were God’s response to the real threat, the sin within them that led them to treat God as the undesired foreigner. The sin in them that was brought about by the real invader, the true enemy of mankind, the devilish serpent who slithered into the Garden to plunder God’s

precious treasure, mankind. The invader whose attack left a slaughter in his wake that is unparalleled, for all of mankind became doomed to die, spiritually, physically, eternally. Sin, the ghoulis specter of death, the schemes of Satan and his demonic legions, the coming fires of hell, these are the things that ultimately held the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, in perpetual darkness. These were the real forces of oppression. And so these are the oppressors whom Jesus will rescue them from, His light burning away their darkness.

Of course, like any invader, Jesus does make a claim upon the people for He declares Himself to be their Lord, the true and eternal King whom God the Father has sent to rescue and rule His people.⁷ But the people will not be won by violence and oppression, for they are the ones under such. Truly, His is a kingdom of peace and freedom as Jesus overcomes the tyrants that hold them in chains. So the people will not be won over by threats, but by promises. True, the threats of wrath, judgment, and destruction will be spoken, lest His promises be ignored. But the promises of grace, of forgiveness, of love and mercy upon repentant sinners, these are what will change people's hearts; these will make a people who love Him and gladly choose to obey Him.

It is the love of God in Christ Jesus that would break the yoke of their burden. As Gideon with just three hundred men broke the power of Midian over Israel by God's miraculous deliverance, even more will the greater Gideon, Jesus, break the power of hell over mankind. For once more great darkness would come over the land, not just Zebulon and Naphtali, but the whole land, when Jesus, the Light of the World, hung on a cross until He died.

But the darkness did not remain and the ending of the physical darkness foreshadowed something greater. For the sunrise on the third day, a Sunday morning, was a picture of a far greater sunrise, when Jesus, the Light of the World, the Son of God, rose in conquering glory. And His spiritual darkness dispelling light continues to invade the world as the Gospel is proclaimed throughout the whole creation.⁸

Brothers and sisters, we of course do not share the geographical particulars of the land of Zebulon and Naphtali. But we do, by nature, share the same darkness that engulfed them, that of our own sin and, through such, Satan's oppression. And truly, such is God's contempt upon "the land" of sinners, His righteous judgment upon all who reject Him. So let us repent of our sins. For we know better than to think that they are a thing of the past, since the yoke of sin weighs heavy on our hearts, as from them much evil flows forth, corrupting our thoughts, words, deeds.⁹

But even as we share that same darkness, so also we share the same glorious light which banishes it. For the light of Christ has shined and continues to shine upon us. Jesus "invaded" *your* life when you were baptized, as He claimed you as His own, washing your sins away and giving you the Holy Spirit. And He continues "occupying" you as you hear His Word and receive His body and blood in the Holy Communion. Through these means, His "heavenly weapons," your sins are forgiven and Satan is cast out. A spiritual victory over the kingdom of darkness that has brought you into the kingdom of light. A spiritual victory, but one that will be made manifest in your *whole* being. For on the Last Day you will be ushered into the true Promised Land of the new creation. And there your liberation from all enemies of body, mind and soul, both within and without, will be enjoyed forever under your gracious King. Amen!

¹ Isaiah 9:1. All quotes are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

² 2 Kings 19:35; Isaiah 37:36.

³ Isaiah 8:20, 22.

⁴ Isaiah 9:6.

⁵ Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23.

⁶ Matthew 4:17.

⁷ Cf. John 17:3.

⁸ Mark 16:15.

⁹ Matthew 15:19.

Third Sunday after the Epiphany (A)
22 January 2023

Presentation of the Offering

Lord Jesus Christ, by Your Holy Spirit give us vision to see the needs of Your kingdom, and give us hearts so filled with thankfulness that we will generously give and diligently labor to fulfill them. Accept this offering which we lay before You. Use it for that great work of preparing missionaries, pastors, and other church workers that Your Word may continue to be proclaimed, and for supporting Your servants who even now speak the divine message of redemption. Amen.

Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Prayer of the Church—Ektene Form

For the gifts of life and salvation, that the Lord would make our way glorious with the forgiveness of sins and the hope of heaven, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the continued proclamation of the cross's power, that from this life-giving tree we would receive the gifts that preserve faith, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the Church's unity in the mind and judgment of Christ, that almighty God would preserve us from division and fix our eyes on the Word centered in the cross, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For families, that our Father in heaven would bless our households with grace and protection; and that we might remember Him in both joy and trouble and so worship before Him forever, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the unborn, that the Author of Life would protect them by limiting the evil of abortion and especially by giving us winsome voices that hearts and minds would be changed from supporting a culture of death to one of life, let us pray to the Lord: : **Lord, have mercy.**

That the Lord, to whom all authority belongs, would rule over the nations for the good of His people, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those oppressed by demons, illness of body or mind, or any other affliction, especially Elizabeth, Bruce, Debbie, Jim, Don, Lois, Betty, Arlyn, Jessica, Lynne, Justin, Russ, Jodi, Susan, Marilyn, Laurie, Drew, and Marilyn, that the Lord Jesus would heal them in body, mind and soul, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For Nick, Kristen, Mackenzie, and Bailey Miller, that our heavenly Father would bless them in body and soul with all things needful for this life and eternity. let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For bold witness before the world, that God would open our mouths to speak of the wonders of life and salvation that His Son has worked for us, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

O Lord, heavenly Father, we gratefully remember the sufferings and death of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation. Rejoicing in His victorious resurrection from the dead, we draw strength from His ascension before You, where He ever stands for us as our own High Priest. Gather us together from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end. Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to You alone we give all glory, honor and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**