



**“Father,
forgive them;
for they
know not what
they do.”**

Luke 23:34, KJV

**Good Friday Tenebrae Service
April 3, 2026 1:00 pm & 6:30 pm**



Good Friday
Order of Worship –
Office of Tenebrae
St. John Lutheran Church
April 3, 2026 1:00 & 6:30 PM

Introductory Remarks: *Today, we will be holding a Tenebrae Service; this is a church practice that goes back to ancient times. The word “Tenebrae” means “darkness.” The service not only reminds us that the world experienced three hours of darkness as Jesus hung on the cross, but it also brings us to remember that, due to our sinfulness, we deserve to be punished in “the outer darkness” separated from God (Matthew 22:13).*

The service begins in silence and ends in darkness. During the service, the candles will be extinguished one by one as a reminder that the life of God, in Jesus, was slowly extinguished as He hung on the cross for us. At the close of the service, there will be a loud noise reminding us that the dead body of Jesus was shut inside His tomb.

This quiet, dark service provides an opportunity to remember that Jesus Christ entered darkness for us and brings us to reflect on our sinfulness – we put Jesus on the cross. Today’s somberness also contrasts well with the light and noise of Easter when we are reminded that Jesus is “The light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). Though He entered darkness and death, He rose to bring us “the light of life” (John 8:12)!

We request that you remain seated throughout the entire service. Upon completion of the service, the congregation will leave silently, without the aid of the ushers. Not a word will be spoken to maintain

the spirit of the worship just completed.

WELCOME *Please silence your electronic devices.*

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"If We Had Been There" by Marilee Zdenek

P: Let us begin by contemplating the part that we have played in Good Friday, in the crucifixion of our Lord for:

C: "He was pierced for *our transgressions*; he was crushed for *our iniquities*; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

P: If we had been Jews who were there, would we have spoken up for Him when the Sanhedrin accused Him of blasphemy?

If we had been Gentiles who were there, would we have defended Him when the Romans condemned Him to death?

If we had been His disciples, would we have stayed with Him when the crowd became a crucifying mob?

C: Or would we have been like Peter, who followed Him and loved Him but denied Him three times before the dawn?

P: And the Christ who was crucified there, once said, "*As you have done it to the least of these, my brothers, you have done it to me.*"

As nations rise in war, as governments oppress the poor,

As passive people turn and look aside, in silence we crucify. Again, we crucify.

C: As indifference forms the pattern of our lives, as hungry children cry for food,

**As widows mourn alone in empty rooms, in apathy we crucify.
Again, we crucify.**

P: I think of the nails that crucified our Lord, they were made of iron; but more - they were made of hatred, prejudice, and greed. And I wonder...What part of myself is found in the shadow of that mob that stretches down through history?

What part of myself creates nails in other forms that wound my brother... and my Lord?

C: You know how many times I have betrayed You, Lord. You know the times I have chosen evil over good. Guilt lies upon my shoulders like an iron coat, weighing me down. My soul is heavy, my burden, hard.

HYMN: "Jesus, I Will Ponder Now LSB 440 v.1-3

- 1 Jesus, I will ponder now
 On Your holy passion;
With Your Spirit me endow
 For such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith
 May the image cherish
Of Your suff'ring, pain, and death
 That I may not perish.

- 2 Make me see Your great distress,
 Anguish, and affliction,
Bonds and stripes and wretchedness
 And Your crucifixion;
Make me see how scourge and rod,
 Spear and nails did wound You,
How for them You died, O God,

Who with thorns had crowned You.

3 Yet, O Lord, not thus alone
Make me see Your passion,
But its cause to me make known
And its termination.
Ah! I also and my sin
Wrought Your deep affliction;
This indeed the cause has been
Of Your crucifixion.

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Sermon

Offering

Prayers

Cong. Resp.: "That was in my place; Jesus, thank you!"

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.

THE LESSONS

P: Let us commemorate Jesus of Nazareth, the God-man, the Savior who was put to death for the sins of the world – for your

sins and mine – as we read and ponder his Passion – his suffering and death out of love for us.

P: Let us pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, please help us to consider all that you have done for us. Make us ashamed for our sin and the part we played in your crucifixion. But help us also to feel loved and relieved as we take our guilt to you in repentance knowing that through your crucifixion, we have your forgiveness. Amen.

FIRST LESSON: Jesus, True God, is Betrayed for You

Matthew 26:46-56 Psalm 41:9

P: Even my close friend in whom I trusted,

C: Who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

P: Let us pray:

C: Jesus, it was Judas who betrayed you, but it is also I. Each time I sin, I betray your love and goodness by choosing something so much less than you above you. Forgive me, Lord, for my betrayal. Have mercy on us, O Lord; have mercy on us.

We sing,

“Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted” LSB 451 v.1-3

The first candle is extinguished and the lights are dimmed.

1 Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
See Him dying on the tree!
'Tis the Christ, by man rejected;
Yes, my soul, 'tis He, 'tis He!
'Tis the long-expected Prophet,

David's Son, yet David's Lord;
Proofs I see sufficient of it:
'Tis the true and faithful Word.

2 Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning,
Foes insulting His distress;
Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would intervene to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that justice gave.

3 Ye who think of sin but lightly
Nor suppose the evil great
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the sacrifice appointed,
See who bears the awful load;
'Tis the Word, the Lord's anointed,
Son of Man and Son of God.

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SECOND LESSON: Jesus, True God, is Tried for You

Matthew 26:57-68 2 Corinthians 5:21

P: For our sake, he made Jesus to be sin who knew no sin,

C: so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

P: Let us pray:

C: Jesus, though you are innocent, you were put on trial and pronounced guilty so that in our judgment trial before God we who are guilty will be pronounced innocent. Thank you for your grace! Have mercy on us, O Lord; have mercy on us.

“My Song Is Love Unknown” LSB 430 v.1-2, 4-5

*The second candle is extinguished and
the lights are dimmed.*

- 1 My song is love unknown,
My Savior’s love to me,
Love to the loveless shown
That they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?

- 2 He came from His blest throne
Salvation to bestow;
But men made strange, and none
The longed-for Christ would know.
But, oh, my friend,
My friend indeed,
Who at my need
His life did spend!

- 4 Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
He gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
Yet they at these
Themselves displease
And ’gainst Him rise.

- 5 They rise and needs will have
My dear Lord made away;

A murderer they save,
The Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful He
To suff'ring goes That He His foes
From thence might free.

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**THIRD LESSON: Jesus, True God, is
Condemned to Death for You**

Matthew 27:11-26 Romans 8:1-4

P: God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do;

C: By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.

P: In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us;

C: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

P: Let us pray:

C: Jesus, as I consider how you were condemned to death for my sins, make me to see the seriousness of my transgression. And as I contemplate the extent of the punishment you endured, bring me to resist temptation and give you thanks for what you have done. Have mercy on us, O Lord; have mercy on us.

We sing,

“Christ, the Life of All the Living” LSB 420 v.1-3
The third candle is extinguished and the lights are dimmed.

1 Christ, the life of all the living,
Christ, the death of death, our foe,
Who, Thyself for me once giving
To the darkest depths of woe:
Through Thy suff'rings, death, and merit
I eternal life inherit.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

2 Thou, ah! Thou, hast taken on Thee
Bonds and stripes, a cruel rod;
Pain and scorn were heaped upon Thee,
O Thou sinless Son of God!
Thus didst Thou my soul deliver
From the bonds of sin forever.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

3 Thou hast borne the smiting only
That my wounds might all be whole;
Thou hast suffered, sad and lonely,
Rest to give my weary soul;
Yea, the curse of God enduring,
Blessing unto me securing.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

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FOURTH LESSON: Jesus, True God, is Mocked for You

Matthew 27:27-31 Philipians 2:6-8

P: Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God,

C: Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

P: But emptied himself,

C: By taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

P: And being found in human form,

C: He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

P: Let us pray:

C: Jesus, you endured this shame for our most shameful deeds. Through your humiliation, cleanse us of all shame, conceit, and pride. And, by the working of Your Holy Spirit, grant us the humility to walk before you in submission to your commands and your grace. Have mercy on us, O Lord; have mercy on us.

We sing,

“O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” LSB 450 v.1-3

The fourth candle is extinguished and the lights are dimmed.

1 O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown.
O sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss, till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine.

2 How pale Thou art with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!
How doth Thy face now languish
That once was bright as morn!

Grim death, with cruel rigor,
Hath robbed Thee of Thy life;
Thus Thou hast lost Thy vigor,
Thy strength, in this sad strife.

3 What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered
Was all for sinners' gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior!
'Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor,
And grant to me Thy grace.

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FIFTH LESSON: Jesus, True God, is Crucified for You

Matthew 27:32-44 Psalm 22:16-18

P: Dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me;

C: They have pierced my hands and feet.

P: I can count all my bones-

C: They stare and gloat over me;

P: They divide my garments among them,

C: For my clothing they cast lots.

P: Let us pray:

C: Jesus, help me to begin to comprehend that awesome love that you have for me that you would let your hands and feet be pierced instead of my own. Then, let me never trust in

myself but only in your sacrifice for my salvation. Have mercy on us, O Lord; have mercy on us.

We sing,
“Upon the Cross Extended” LSB 453 v.1-2, 5
The fifth candle is extinguished and the lights are dimmed.

- 1 Upon the cross extended
See, world, your Lord suspended.
Your Savior yields His breath.
The Prince of Life from heaven
Himself has freely given
To shame and blows and bitter death.

- 2 Come, see these things and ponder,
Your soul will fill with wonder
As blood streams from each pore.
Through grief beyond all knowing
From His great heart came flowing
Sighs welling from its deepest core.

- 5 Your soul in griefs unbounded,
Your head with thorns surrounded,
You died to ransom me.
The cross for me enduring,
The crown for me securing,
You healed my wounds and set me free.

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SIXTH LESSON: Jesus, True God, Dies for You

Matthew 27:45-54 Hebrew 10:9-10

P: Jesus said, “Behold, I have come to do your will.”

C: And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

P: Let us pray:

C: Jesus, bring us to look devoutly to that honored cross where you loved us to the point of your own death. In that death we place all our confidence. Help us live only for you and to die trusting only in you, embracing your sacrifice as our sanctification. Have mercy on us, O Lord; have mercy on us.

We sing,

“Were You There” LSB 456 v.1-3

The sixth Candle is extinguished and the lights are dimmed.

- 1 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?
- 2 Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
Oh . . .
Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble,
tremble.
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
- 3 Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

Oh . . .

Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble,
tremble.

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

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SEVENTH LESSON: Jesus, True God, is Buried for You

Matthew 27:57-66 Isaiah 53:9-10

P: And they made his grave with the wicked,

C: And with a rich man in his death,

P: Although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

C: Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief;

P: When his soul makes an offering for guilt,

C: He shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

P: Let us pray:

C: Father, we pray that when our bodies likewise descend into the grave that you would remember that Jesus' body went there first. And, as his body rose again on Easter, we pray, trusting in your promises, that ours would do the same. Have mercy on us, O Lord; have mercy on us.

“O Darkest Woe” LSB 448 v.1-3,7

1

O darkest woe
Ye tears, forth flow!
Has earth so sad a wonder?
God the Father's only son
Now is buried yonder

2

O sorrow dread!
Our God is dead,
Upon the cross extended
There His love enlivened us
As His life was ended

3

O child of woe:
Who struck the blow
That killed our gracious Master?
"It was I" thy conscience cries,
"I have wrought disaster!"

7

O Jesus Christ,
Who sacrificed
Thy life for lifeless mortals:
Be my life in death and bring
Me to heavens portals!

The seventh candle is extinguished and the lights turned off; after the final candle is extinguished, the book is loudly closed symbolizing that all is now finished, our sins have been paid for, and the stone has been rolled over Jesus' tomb.

**Please come up to add a nail to Jesus' cross,
remembering that our sins put Him there.**

PLEASE DISMISS YOURSELVES IN SILENCE

Please join us on Easter morning, April 5th

Easter Sunrise Service 6:30 am

Easter Breakfast between services in basement

Easter Morning Service 9:00 am