

(lively organ music) ("Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above")

- The peace of God and the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you all. Brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves to celebrate the Eucharist, let us call to mind, our sins and our need for confession. When we get there to praise God, we remember that we are his people who have preferred our wills to his. Accepting his power to become new persons in Christ, let us confess our sin before God and one another. (lively choir music) Let us pray.

Congregation: Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed. We have not loved you with our whole heart, we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We pray you have your mercy, forgive what we have been, amend what we are, direct what we shall be, that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen. Hear the good news, Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That is God's own proof of his love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

Congregation: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God, amen. (lively choir music)

- Let us pray. Lord, open our hearts and minds to the power of thy holy spirit, that has the scriptures I read and the word proclaimed. We may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen. The gospel lesson of the morning is taken from Matthew, the 20th chapter, the 17th through the 23rd versus. "And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the 12 disciples aside and on the way he said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem and the son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified. And he will be raised on the third day.' Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, James and John, and kneeling before him. She asked him for something and he said to her, 'What do you want?' And she said to him, 'Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left in your kingdom.' But Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?' And they said to him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'You will drink my cup but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant. But it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my father.'" Amen? May the Lord instruct us in the meaning of these words. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink? This question asked us how we stand with regard to the Christian life itself. It is asked of would be Christians today and every day, it is a question I think wholly appropriate to this first Sunday of lent. To keep lent and to celebrate the Lord's supper are one and the same. The Lenten season is at least as old as the second century of our era. Irenaeus speaks of it. In that time, the canons of the Council of Nicea of 325 AD, designate lent as a fast of 40 days before Easter. From early times then, lent stands for the church's answer to the question of our Lord, stated to the sons of Zebedee. "Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" Likewise, in the celebration of the Lord's supper, the early church was I think, giving its response to Jesus' question, as it was able. The intention to make Christ sacrifice it's own, what's the meaning of the Eucharist?

So also in lent, men and women of faith purpose to keep company with their Lord through the wilderness of his temptation. They intend to accompany him to Jerusalem through the crisis days of his passion and to the divine exaltation of Easter. In early centuries, lent was a time of rigorous fasting and self-denial. It was, and is a time of penitence and devotion itself. From the beginning, it seems, the Lenten season discloses an instinctive determination of faith to share in the Lord sufferings with a grateful heart. It is this same mind and will, the will to participate with Christ in his sufferings and with thanksgiving, that makes our celebration of the Lord's supper this first Sunday of lent, very meet and right. For the supper of the Lord invites the Christian to give thanks, to drink the cup and to partake of Christ passion as he is able, and to give thanks. That indeed is what the Eucharist means, to remember with thanksgiving. It is his distress upon thanksgiving that is central in the liturgy of the Eastern churches and also in the Roman rite. Thence, it passes down through the book of Common Prayer, the Edwardian service of holy communion to the Methodist tradition, the note of Thanksgiving is sounded in the *Sursum Corda* before the Sanctus. "Lift up your hearts," is the call of the minister to the assembled congregation and the congregation replies, "We lift them up unto the Lord," and then the congregation is enjoined. Let us give thanks unto the Lord. And the answer comes, "It is meet and right so to do." And then the confirming prayer follows, "It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty that we should at all times and in all places, give thanks unto thee, oh Lord, holy father, Almighty, Everlasting God." And then, having received the sacrament of the bread and the cup, there comes the ancient prayer of thanks giving and dedication of self. The language may be 16th century, but so is Shakespeare. The prayer is a magnificent summation of Christian faith and Christian vocation and life. Since our conventional use of the great prayers of the church is sometimes perfunctory, we do not always hear what we are saying. Therefore, let us listen intently to the eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving. Oh Lord, our heavenly father, we thy humble servants desire thy fatherly goodness. Mercifully, to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, most humbly beseeching thee to grant that by the merits and death of thy son, Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, that is his pledge of obedience. We and thy whole church may obtain forgiveness of our sins and all other benefits of his passion. And here we offer and present unto the all Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice unto thee. I find this prayer of the liturgy sums up perhaps better than anything, the meaning of lent. But also, and likewise, it sets forth the Christian life and worship. To unpack its meaning would require many sermons. This morning, I call your attention only to one theme and two correlative phrases. The theme is simple but overlooked. It is that in this prayer, Christian life and Christian worship are not two things apart, but always an only one and the same. The Christian life is an offering to God. And here is the first phrase. It is a sacrifice and offering of praise and thanksgiving. It is prompted as it is also impelled by faith in the perfect self offering of Christ. This is its sole-motivating source. Its single-landed sufficient ground. This prayer of salvation then, declares the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup to be identification of the believer with Christ in his full perfect and sufficient sacrifice. By drinking his cup, we unite ourselves intentionally with Christ and share his pledge of our participation with him in his fulfilled vocation of perfect obedience. But this too is the meaning of lent. Both lent and the Eucharist are acts of worship. They are our offering, our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, but there is another phrase to do. It is complimentary with the first, it says, And here, "that is here and now also, "We offer unto thee Lord ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable holy and living sacrifice unto thee." It is the distinctive teaching of the Christian faith in so far as we understand it, that all sacrifices that are substitutes for the self's self offering are vain. Instead, in the Christian view, the whole of life is offered to God, you now identification with Christ in the

likeness of his fulfilled vocation. And moreover, it is this participation with Christ, this sharing his cup, which is the root and substance of the Christian life itself. It is what Saint Paul calls in Romans, "A living sacrifice." The whole life in day-by-day service of God, it begins in the Eucharist, it issues into the world. Without the Eucharist, it is ruthless. But it is always as Thomas a Kempis saw and said, "Imitatio Christi". Get it is not, this Imitatio, it is not quite our English word imitation, but much more nearly, it is our word identification. Identification Christi, with Christ in his perfect obedience. The one theme then I stressed today for our consideration, you know our Eucharistic prayer of Thanksgiving is this, Christian worship and Christian life are not two things but one. They are two sides of the same coin, as it were. Alike, they are both a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God and always, and only in the life of Christ. The Christian life is worship and work, in reciprocal relationship. The Lord's supper is it once the summit of our worship and the impulse of our work, the two are inseparable. Liturgy and life. And so it is that the question of Jesus to the sons of Zebedee, is our question too, and urgent. "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" Jesus asks us. Our answer is the measure of our disposition to participate with him in his temptations, in his passion, and to give thanks for his perfect self-offering. It is the measure of our will and devotion to make his offering our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, both in worship and in the ways of life. It's arduous and some times torturous ways. It is to this measure of devotion then that we are called, I think, by both the season of lent and the immemorial supper of the Lord. "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" The answer is always ours to make. It is the answer first of faith and then of thanksgiving. Amen.

- Let us affirm our faith.

Congregation: We believe in God who has created and is creating, who has come in the true man, Jesus, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by his spirit, we trust him. He calls us to be in his church, to celebrate his presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen, our judge and our hope, in life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone, thanks be to God. Now in accordance with our Lord's instruction, let us offer prayers of intercession and petition for our world, our neighbors and ourselves. Let us pray. Let us pray that the world we may live in peace, that in the church, there may be achieved unity, fulfilling its service here and in all places.

Congregation: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

- Let us pray that all ministers and teachers in the church, maybe faithful servants of the gospel, leading others into its way of life and strengthening their faith.

Congregation: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

- Let us pray that the leaders of this nation and of the world, may govern with justice and mercy.

Congregation: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

- Let us pray that all our work may be done for the common good, that it'd be done in safety, that all may be spared from grinding toil which destroys fullness of life.

Congregation: Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

- Let us pray that those who work on frontiers of truth and those who enrich our lives with beauty and joy, maybe free to follow their vocations.

Congregation: Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

- Let us pray that those who have suffer disease or poverty or loneliness or grief, maybe healed and comforted. That those who are oppressed or persecuted may be strengthened and delivered.

Congregation: Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

- Let us pray that those whom we have known and loved who have died in the faith, may be a glorious memory to us and a source of renewed fellowship with all the saints.

Congregation: Lord in your mercy hear our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

- Christ, our Lord, invites to his table, all who love him and who desire to live in peace with one another. May the peace of the Lord be with you always.

Congregation: And also with you.

- As forgiven and reconciled people, let us offer ourselves and our gifts unto God. (calm organ music) ("The Committal") (gentle spirited music) Blessed are you Lord God of all creation. So your goodness, we have this bread to offer which earth has given and human hands have made. May it become for us the bread of life. Blessed are you Lord God of all creation, through your goodness, we have this wine to offer. Fruit of the vine and work of human hands. May it become our spiritual drink. Lord God, we ask you to receive us and be pleased with the sacrifice we offer you. Thou art the broken bread that makes us whole, thou art the drinking cup whereby we thirst no more. Glory be to you, Lord God, forever and ever, amen. The Lord is with you.

- And with you also.

- Lift up your hearts.

- We lift them up to the Lord.

- Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

Congregation: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

- Father, it is right that we should always and everywhere give you thanks and praise, only you are God. You created all things and called them good, you made us in your own image, even when we rebelled against your love, you did not desert us. You delivered us from captivity and made covenant to be our God and King, and spoke to us through your prophets. Therefore, we join the entire company of heaven and all your people now on earth, in worshiping and glorifying you.

Congregation: Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

- We thank you father, that you loved the world so much, you sent your only son to be our savior. The Lord of all life came to live among us, he healed and taught men, ate with sinners, and won for you a new people by water and the spirit. We saw his glory yet he humbled himself in obedience to your will, freely accepting death on a cross. By dying, He freed us from unending death. By rising from the dead, He gave us everlasting life. We remember that on the night in which he gave himself up for us, the Lord Jesus took bread and after giving you thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples and said, "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you." (bread breaking) When the supper was over, he took the cup and again, he returned thanks to you and gave the cup to his disciples and said, "Drink from this all of you. This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood poured out for you and many for the forgiveness of sin." When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we experience a new, the presence of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and look forward to his coming in final victory.

Congregation: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

- We remember and proclaim with gratitude, heavenly Father, what your son has done for us in his life and death and his resurrection and ascension, except our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, in union with Christ offering for us as a reasonable and holy surrender of ourselves. Send the power of your holy spirit upon us, gathered here out of love for you, and on these gifts. Help us know and the breaking of this bread and in the drinking of this wine, the presence of Christ who gave his body and blood for mankind. Make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in the service of all mankind.

Congregation: Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit and your holy church, all glory and honor is yours, father, amen.

- In unity with Christ and with each other, we pray.

Congregation: Our Father in heaven, holy be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today the bread we need, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

Amen. (calm organ music) ♪ O Lamb of God ♪ ♪ That takest away the sins of the world ♪ ♪ Have mercy upon us ♪ ♪ O Lamb of God ♪ ♪ That takest away the sins of the world ♪ ♪ Have mercy upon us ♪ ♪ O Lamb of God ♪ ♪ That takest away the sins of the world ♪ ♪ Grant us Thy peace ♪ This is the lamb of God who takes away the

sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper. The body of Christ bring you everlasting life and hope, the blood of Christ bring you everlasting life and hope. (lively organ music) ("DUNDEE") (gentle solemn music) Let us offer unto God our common prayer of commitment. Let us pray. You have given yourself to us Lord.

Congregation: Now we give ourselves for others.

- Your love has made us a new people.

Congregation: As a people of love, we will serve you with joy.

- Your glory has filled our hearts.

Congregation: Help us to glorify you in all things, amen. (lively organ music) (speakers speaking off the mic)