

♪ Holy Almighty God, king of creation ♪ (instrumental music)

- Grace be to you and peace from God, our Father, and from the Lord, Jesus Christ. The gospel tells us that Christians are a people who accept life as a gift from God. Here at this time and this place, we hear again, who we are, and we stand in faith before the one who created us and gave us life. And it is also here again that we grasp what it means to truly live a free and human life under God. And in that light, we see our own attempts weakened, tired, and discouraged. And we realize that most of us have lived and used our life with reckless unconcern. And although our tongues and our hearts are a little used to confession, yet our lives make unavoidably plain the fact that we have tried to live on what the world offered us and that in our own inner selves, we are neither sustained nor satisfied. And thus, we hear again, the external call of God to come back again to his forgiving love, let us then offer unto God our prayer of confession and for pardon, let us pray. Jesus said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Almighty and forgiving God, we turn to thee in this act of worship, realizing afresh that we have no claim upon thee until we are real with ourselves, help us our Father to make this service and affirmation of faith and trust and honesty, thou art, our father, and we belong to thee. Only in thy presence are we genuinely human, thou art our maker and owner only in response to thy creative love are we capable of creation. Our Father, we believe that Jesus Christ is mighty to save and that we stand in constant need of his redeeming grace. We believe in thy Spirit quickening life and all things, vivifying the stale stuff of our tradition and our habit, and leading us upward into new conquests of life. Yet we are here today, not because we believe in thee, but because thou does believe in us, help us to stand in that faith and confess our sins. Father we have come out of a world where things have shouted at us, bullied us into listening, competed for our attention, bribed us with a hope of glittering prices. And now we find ourselves in the shy and delicate world of the Spirit where nothing shouts. Here, nothing is revealed except to the humble and contrite. And we confess that we are not humble though we would like to be deeply and truly humble, humble enough to bow to the authority of truth and goodness and beauty. We confess that we are not contrite though we are often sorry, sorry for ourselves and our own failures. Make us, our Father genuinely contrite, aware that the sins we commit are done against thee, and thy purposes of love. Forgive us, oh Lord what we have been, help us to truly amend what we are and in thy Spirit direct what we shall be that thou may as come into the full glory of thy creation in us and in all men, we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Let us hear and receive these assuring words of promise and of hope from the gospel. Jesus said to a repentance sinner, "Be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven, go and sin no more." And the gospel tells us that the power that lighted the stars, that puts down evil and lifts up the poor from the dust can also transform our twisted and broken lives for the door of our freedom opens by itself for all who have not. Whoever is in Jesus, the liberator has become a new being. And so he who provides us with bread from the earth, air to breathe and fire to purify rottenness, now, also in his great waters of life, drowned your old self and give you a new beginning to the community of love, which is his church. Amen. So may it be for all of us. Let us respond to these new acceptances, these new meanings of the gospel message in our own life as we offer unto God, our unison prayer of thanksgiving. Let us pray. Oh Lord our God, the author, and giver of all good things. We thank thee for all thy mercies and for thy loving

care over all thy creatures. We bless thee for the gift of life, for thy protection round about us, for thy guiding hand upon us and for the tokens of thy love within us. We thank thee for friendship and duty, for good hopes and precious memories, for the joys that cheer us and the trials that teach us to put our trust in thee. Most of all, we thank thee for the saving knowledge of thy son, our savior, for the living presence of thy Spirit, for thy church, the body of Christ, for the ministry of word and sacrament, and all the means of grace and all these things, oh Father, make us wise unto a right use of thy benefits that we may render an acceptable thanksgiving unto thee all the days of our life. Through Jesus Christ, amen. (instrumental music) The scripture lesson for the day is taken from the First Epistle to the Corinthians chapter 13. Let us hear as Saint Paul describes the nature of the essence of the Christian life, which is love. "And now I will show you the best way of all. I may speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but if I am without love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging symbol. I may have the gift of prophecy and know every hidden truth. I may have faith, strong enough to move mountains, but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may dole out all that I possess or even give my body to be burnt, but if I have no love, I am none the better. For love is patient, love is kind and envies no one, love is never boastful nor conceited, nor rude, never selfish, not quick to take offense. Love keeps no score of wrongs, does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face. There is no limit to its faith, its hope or its endurance. Love will never come to an end. Are their prophets? Their work will be over. Are their tongues of ecstasy they will cease, is their knowledge, it will vanish away. For our knowledge and our prophecy alike are partial and the partial vanishes when wholeness comes. When I was a child, my speech, my outlook, and my thoughts were all childish. When I grew up, I had finished with childish things. Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial then it will be whole like God's, like God's knowledge of me. In a word then, there are three things that will last forever, faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of them all is love." Here ends the reading of the lesson. (instrumental music) The Lord be with you. Let us pray. Let us offer unto God, our prayers for others and for ourselves. Oh God, invisible and eternal, thou thy hundred names, but ever the same in mercy and in love. We praise thee for creation and all its power, for the things made in the beginning that have come in the spring and in the summer, for the things that live and bear fruit and die and are with thee. Almighty God, we take our place in the family of men, as we offer our prayers of concern and petition for our world, for our brothers and sisters and for ourselves. We call on the thy Spirit, oh God and we ask thy presence and power for all those in thy creation that are poor and hungry this day, for those who are outcast and unemployed, for children, unwanted in their homes, for the wounded, for prisoners and the exile, for all those in every land persecuted for conscience sake, we call on thy Spirit and we ask thy presence and thy power for all who are sick and suffering in mind and in body. Be with all those who this day are about to die, we ask, oh God, may thy love penetrate their condition and quench their hunger and bring peace. Ooh, Lord, we call on thy presence and we ask thy power for those whom we fear or resent or cannot love. We ask thy presence for all those who are close to us here and in every place, our relatives and our friends. Oh, creator and Redeemer God, we have labored each of us in our own place seeking to share in the work of thy world. We have known the anguish of incompetence and we have tasted the bitterness of failure. We have dreamed dreams and we seen visions, our brains and our hands have longed to lift our labor to such creativity that all that we did would sing with joy, lured by something beyond our failure and something beyond our small successes, we have struggled onward that we may be accounted worthy of thee. Grant, us oh Lord, patience to endure our failures and humility to outgrow our achievements, that we may increasingly serve thee and our fellow men. Oh God, our Father,

help us we ask to come to terms with our humanness and all of its glories and frustrations, for it seems as if we are always trying either to take thy place or to forget about thee and do just as we please. We feel frustrated by our animal needs and we ask thy help in transforming and humanizing them. To be able to see food as a daily assurance of thy care, to accept sleep as a well earned benediction and not merely an interruption of our activities. To know love is not self-gratification, but self-giving as thou has taught us in Christ. Oh God, our Father, we feel frustrated by the tyranny of time, eight hour days, and 40 hour weeks, and threescore years and 10. Help us we ask to accept the endless details that chew up our days, without which nothing would ever get done. Help us to come to terms with our own laziness that lets us think we are working when we're only moaning about lack of time. Above all our Father, we feel frustrated by our limited minds and spirits and we pray for a reach that exceeds our grasp, help us to see beyond the trivia that threatened to clutter up our minds, that we may see the grand design of love and of truth and of beauty. Help us, oh God, to be open, open to every experience which life does present to us, to tolerate new thoughts and new persons that seem threatening and help us to give our spirits free reign that we may see thee, and find thee, and know thee who speaketh to us through Jesus of Nazareth, who taught us that we might be bold to pray together saying as Christians, "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. Amen."

- I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God, for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of him who subjected it in hope because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now, hope that is seen is not hope for who hopes for what he sees, but if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience, for in this hope we are saved. At the close of the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, which was read in your hearing, Paul lists the three great words of Christian experience, faith, hope, and love and concludes by saying that the greatest of these is love. I do not wish to engage in debate with Paul on the subject, although in essence, I suppose I already have by simply rearranging his triad and putting hope last for emphasis. Of course, all three concepts are of vital importance. The late Emil Brunner, the great Swiss theologian, said that each one of them could claim to be the most important. Even more, he said, "Each of them expresses the whole of Christian existence, the totality of what it means to be a Christian. Each one of them is not just one possibility, but is the criteria of true Christianity." Thus to emphasize in one of these three words, my point is, is by no means to belittle the other two. I lift up the concept of hope this morning because I feel that in this time, what we need most is hope. And the words of Paul's letter to the Romans, "We are saved by hope." Perhaps hope has been the most misunderstood and the most neglected of the three great Christian facts. For example, Brunner, in trying to demonstrate the relationship between these concepts and the realms of existence, links faith with the past, love with the present, hope with the future. We live in the past by faith. We live in the present by love. We live in the future by hope. Now immediately, this place has hope and a disadvantage, after all, the future is not quite as real as the present or even the past. Faith linked to the

history of our heritage is highly prized as we rejoice in the great examples of Christian faith in the past and as recorded in our Bible and in other biographies. You see all of this and all that I've experienced as a part of my present faith, faith is that which we believe and live by. It is built upon a firm foundation of that which I have learned in my own experience. Faith is non-transferable. It cannot be passed on from father to son. I must live by that, which has informed my existence. Faith is Paul saying, "I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded." Faith demands you see that each man know God for himself. I cannot live on my mother's faith, but in the words of George Arthur Buttrick, "One day God through Jesus Christ walked down my street and knocked at my door. And I heard him say to me, "Thy sins I've forgiven thee."" I stand here this morning, because one day I met Jesus and he changed my life. That's something you can get ahold of. That is something that you can grab. That's real, but hope, well, that is for dreamers, idealists, stargazers, isn't it? Not so. If that were true, Paul could never say that we are saved by hope for no man is saved by merely stargazing. I'm also conscious of the fact that we usually say that we are saved by love or grace, which is God's forgiving love. It was a song that's a long, we were on the hit parade, which said, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me." And that's true. The love of God, his unmerited favor, which is so freely showered upon us. The winsomeness of God is that which wins us over, which helps us to turn around, which is conversion. And so in that sense, we are saved by love. But the faith response to the love of God is only the beginning of the process. After our conversion, we must grow in discipleship and it is hope that keeps us moving along the path. See salvation is not a one shot affair, it is a lifelong process. We continue to walk in the ways of God and it is hope that makes us disciples, or perhaps we should define our term as best we can. Hope is not to be confused with wishful thinking. Pardon me for beginning my discussion of what hope is by saying what it's not. But I take my cue from Paul as he wrestles with the definition of love in the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, notice, he says, "Love is not jealous or boastful. It is not arrogant or rude, does not insist on its own way, is not irritable or resentful and so forth." Sometimes the best way to get ahold of a difficult concept is to begin to peel away that which does not belong to it, to isolate it from that, which is foreign to it. So, hoping is not wishing, even though we use the word, you know, I hope tomorrow is a sunny day. That's a wish, it has nothing to do with Christian hope. That is a specific and very personal desire and it really doesn't differ much from some of our other wild wishes like, I hope tomorrow I inherit a million dollars. Of course that's daydreaming, pleasant, but not profitable. But always hope, it seems to me reaches out to embrace more than the self. It is never just my hope nor does it apply only to me, in that sense, hope is more general than specific. It is more holistic than fragmentary, more universal than parochial. You see Christian hope is really a total attitude toward all of life. It makes therefore the same all embracing claim as does love. Love cannot be selective by its very nature. You cannot decide whom you will love and say, "I will love this person and this person, but not that person." It does not work that way. If you do not love your brother, you cannot love God. The Bible puts it more bluntly. He who says that he loves God whom he has not seen, but hates his brother whom he has seen is a liar and the truth is not in him. Jesus says you are to love your neighbor as you love yourself. So, if I am incapable of loving myself, I can not love my neighbor. If I do not love my neighbor, I cannot love God. It's all of one piece, one fabric. You either love everybody or nobody. One of the ironic tragedies of our lifetime is to watch those persons who have begun by hating certain people in the society, have now come to the sorry state of hating their own children, their own flesh and blood. But then that's the way it works. Well, hope is a total outlook upon life. While it is future-oriented, nevertheless, it changes our attitude toward the present and even the past for that matter, it causes us to act upon our faith and it may help us to understand how to love as well

as how to live in the present, for we live by hope. On the other hand, hell is hopelessness. It is entirely appropriate that at the entrance to Dante's Hell, his Inferno, there stands the words, "Abandon hope all ye who enter here." Ultimate death, perhaps it ought to read, "Ye who have abandoned hope enter here." And so Paul defines Christians simply as those who have hope. Now, what are some of the components of hope? Well, Christian hope will take a careful look at human history and say that history is not cyclical. It is aiming at something. It is going somewhere. It is moving toward an omega point, a culmination. There's not going around in circles. It is moving toward a climax and a goal. There is both direction and purpose and human history and events occur that serve to move toward that goal. Cynics like the writer of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament may claim that there's nothing new under the sun, the sun rises and sets, the winds blow to and fro, what has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done. And there's nothing new under the sun, of course, right in the Old Testament, this pessimism is corrected when Isaiah, hears God saying, "Behold, I am doing a new thing." And then there's that radical revolutionary statement in the New Testament, which says, "Behold, I make all things new." In 2 Peter, the word is, "We wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, all things new." That's our hope. Isn't it but you notice there was no separation in the matter of heaven and earth, they are and they belong together. Hope is related to the destinies of both heaven and earth. It therefore transcends the false dichotomy that we tend to set up. It is convenient to talk about the natural and the supernatural, but is the truth. St. Thomas Aquinas said centuries ago, "Man has not an ultimate natural end and an ultimate supernatural end. He has only one single ultimate end, namely the future promised by God." And to push it further, what do we know of a body without a spirit? Has not God forever joined the two? When God, as portrayed in the creation story in Genesis, kneels down by, in the words of James Weldon Johnson, "The banks of a river and begins to mold this body out of the clay." It says that, "After he had formed the physical body, that God breathed into this lump of clay, his own breath, his Spirit, the breath of life, and now out of this union of body and spirit, something new emerges, man becomes a living soul." Soul is getting it all together. You know soul music is being able to take the nitty gritty of life, the hard knocks, the problems, the troubles and the trials, and putting these things to music so that the indomitable spirit of man shines through as he is able to sing about not only the joys, but the sorrows of life, that's soul. A man can project it in such a way that you can feel what he feels. And we say, we seek to save souls. We need the whole man, all of him. And so to the question, should the Christian Church be involved in poverty and health and welfare programs? The answer is, of course. Should we be involved in the efforts to end the pollution of our environment? Of course, this is God's world. And anything that harms man physically, mentally, or spiritually, or his world must be dealt with. So the church, not just a few kids that we can dismiss as hippies, but the church ought to confront general motives in the other corporations and say repent and be converted. After all a corporation, legally is just an extended personality. Well, hope causes us, you see, to be actively involved in all phases of human existence, as we await for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell and where there shall be universal justice, universal liberation, universal peace. So the major concept here is nothing less than the very kingdom of God. Well, perhaps you're beginning to see what I meant when I said that hope is more, is much more really than having a future dream. We must harness that dream and become actively involved in causing the future projection to become a present reality. There is nothing in the eschaton, which is not in the present, at least in capsule form. The future determines the present. You thought it was the other way around. No, the future determines the present. I can remember hearing the late Paul Shira, illustrate this so eloquently. He talked to a student who was pouring over his books, studying on a weekend

at a college. His contemporaries were all out at social events. Why was this student there? Well, he wanted to be a doctor surgeon, and he knew that there were certain facts that he had to put into the memory bank of his mind. And there were certain disciplines of mind and body under which he had to go. The future determines the present. The Hudson River begins as fresh water streams high up in the Adirondack Mountains and flows down until it becomes a great river that cuts through the hot of the Empire State out past New York City and into the bay of New York, where it begins to mingle with the briny, tangy, salty deeps of the Atlantic Ocean. But long before it reaches the Atlantic Ocean, way back upstream, about a hundred miles near Poughkeepsie, New York, the Hudson River begins to taste salty. Beloved, now are we the sons of God? It does not yet appear what we shall be but when Christ appears, we shall be like him. We shall see him as he is. How do you know that? Because each day we're getting more like him. We're growing in his likeness. Whoever, John says, "Has this hope within him, purifies himself as he is pure." So you'll notice the message of Jesus to his disciples. He talked about the kingdom, not just as a future dream, but as a present reality. As you go, he said to his disciples, "Say the kingdom of God has come near to you. Even if they don't accept you, as you shake the dust from your garment and walk away, say to them, nevertheless, know this, the kingdom has come near. How do you know, you brought it with you? You are part of it." Jesus could say without a candor and confidence, as he walked the dusty roads of Galilee to anyone he met, "Repent, the kingdom of God has come near." Because he was the embodiment of it. He was part and parcel of it. So the vision of the future, while we call it that, really places us under a present obligation, the theologians of hope have reminded us of the sin of omission. You know that other aspect of sin, we have usually equated sin with the acts, the deeds, even the thoughts that we have, the words spoken that are wrong and not in accord with the will of God. We placed the emphasis upon those things that are committed. But these men stress the good that is omitted, that which we failed to do. You see, given a vision of the kingdom of God that has been entrusted to us as Christians, what are we gonna do about it? To do nothing towards its realization or to do little toward the implementation is to sin. Jesus, condemn men, sometimes not for what they did, but what they didn't do. Note please, his harsh, verbal condemnation of the man with one talent. Not because he had one talent, but because he failed to use the one talent. And note the tacit condemnation of the scribe and the Levite in the Good Samaritan story who passed by leaving the man who had fallen among the robbers to bleed and that great picture of the last judgment, which Jesus narrates. There were some who were told to enter the kingdom, but others were told to depart and they said, "Why, what did we do wrong? We were good church members. We gave our money." And Jesus said, "Is not so much what you did, but what you didn't do. I was hungry and you did not feed me. I was naked and you didn't cloth me. I was sick and in prison and you never came near me. I was thirsty and you did not give me the drink." This is the other dimension of sin. We must deal with it. So my choices have to be controlled. My ordering of priorities sometimes have to be changed. I must be as a Christian dissatisfied with the present situation. Now, I can't see the New Order yet. I have to admit that I would need hope if I could see it. As Paul says, "Who hopes for what he sees if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." And the word patience as used here means endurance. It does not mean we sit down and twiddle our thumbs. It means we don't give up. We are impatient with things as they are and we don't quit. So hope motivates us to do something about the present situation. When I was young, I heard an eloquent sermon about the hereafter. It described the beauties of heaven. It talked about the pearly gates and the golden streets, but what good are golden streets there if the streets of the ghetto are not even paved with asphalt here? And if we expect the lion and the lamb to lie down together, we'd better be preparing some lions and

some lambs right now for this great encounter. "What happens to a dream deferred?", Langston Hughes as in his "Lenox Avenue Mural" called "Harlem". Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun or fester like a sore and then run? Does it stink like rotten meat or crust and sugar over like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load or does it explode? We are called upon not to defer the dream, but to live out the tenants of our hope as well as our faith and our love. I said that I do not yet see the New Order, but I can report to you this morning that I can see the outlines of it. And I'm happy to be able to say this. I see it as I am able to discern what God is doing in the world right now, for truly God is involved in the affairs of men, but he moves in mysterious ways. He has wonders to perform, I must warn you. We naturally look and wish for hope as it is embodied in peace and tranquility, but oftentimes, God stirs us to unrest. Well, I know we blame other people for the turmoil in our world. We even sometimes blame the devil, but it is God who is often the culprit. You see, as long as there is evil and injustice in the world, there will be no tranquility, for God will not let us rest. We normally wish and hope for order and conformity, but isn't it becoming clear that what we have called order really leads to chaos, that our order ends in repression and an exploitation, perhaps what we need is some chaos. All of which hopefully, there might emerge a new order, a new creation. Well, the point is that God is involved in human history. And the amazing fact is that unlike the way we attempt to live, he is not a spectator, but a participant, moreover he is not just a neutral participant like the umpire in a baseball game. God is not neutral. The umpire doesn't care who wins or loses, God cares. He is not neutral. God takes sides in the struggles of life. The Bible pictures, him therefore, not on the side of the majority, whether silent or otherwise, but on the side of the minority, he is on the side of the Hebrew slaves against Egypt. He's on the side of the widow, the orphan, the distress, the downtrodden, the oppressed, and not those who devour widows' houses. And Jesus comes along and picks up this prophetic tradition by saying, "I have a message of cheer for the weary and the heavily laden. I have come to release the captive and to set at liberty those who are oppressed. I have good news for the poor." God is therefore involved so that judgment can become effective. We did not talk so much now about judgment, but it seems to me in any kind of concept of hope, there must be the concept of judgment. It may seem incompatible at first, but judgment has to be an important part of any concept of hope. We used to sing, you may run on for a long time, but let me tell you, God Almighty is gonna cut you down. You may throw a rock and hide your hand, working in the dark against your fellow man but sure has God made day and night, what you do in the dark will be brought to light. You may run and hide, slip and slide trying to take the moolah from your neighbor's eye, but sure as God made the rich and the poor, you're gonna reap my brother, just what you sow. You may run on for a long time, but after a while, God Almighty is gonna cut you down. Unless we think the judgment is just a personal matter and I guess we tend to do this, to think of one person standing before the bar of God. No, judgment is a continuing phenomenon through life. And it applies not just to individuals, but to institutions and governments and nations. We used to also sing, my Lord's gonna move this wicked race. And he's gonna raise up a nation that shall obey. Well, you see the eye opening fact is that the disinherited all over the world are beginning to possess a new hope as they struggle for liberation, the gospel has been heard and it is being appropriated. Make no mistake. You see the gospel always bears fruit. We may not like the fruit it bears. If you tell a man long enough that he's a son of God, like you are, he begins to believe it after awhile. And then he may say to you, get your foot off my neck, but that's the gospel bearing fruit, whether we like it or not. So the Christian hope is liberating people all over the world. What a tragedy will be if they are saved and we are not. Suppose the statement of Jesus literally comes true when he said that the harlots and the publicans and the sinners go into the kingdom, but not you. And let's refer that to the

respectable Western churchmen, suppose people in other parts of the world, what we would call the third world begin to grasp this picture of universal justice and peace while we have neglected it in our haste for other pursuits. What a tragedy? Is that why Paul says at one place, "I keep my body under subjection. I pummel it," he says. Lest after I have preached to others, been a missionary all over the world. After I have preached the gospel to others, I myself shall become a castaway or disqualified. Well, you see, my Bible tells me, "That on that day, when God gathers up his people, then men will come from the east as well as from the west, from the north and from the south and out of every tongue and tribe and nation and they shall sit down together around the Lord's table in God's everlasting kingdom." John, and his vision of the future on the island of Patmos saw a number that no man could number coming up before the throne of God. And an elder said to him, "John, who are these people?" And John began to hedge. He said, "Well, you must know." I think I know why John didn't wanna answer. You see all the folks who were supposed to be there had already come up before the throne of God. The 12 tribes of Israel had already paraded past, all the respectable churchmen had already come. And now here comes a great multitude and John's not sure who these people are. We used to sing, there'll be some people there we never thought would get there. And we'll say, "Who are they?" The Spirit said to John, "John, these are they the disinherited, the wretched of the earth. These are they the poor, the outcast. These are they ready to cry sometimes, but John these are they who've come up out of great tribulation. They've washed their roofs white in the blood of the lamb. And now they've got palm branches in their hand. The sun shall not smite them anymore, John. They shall not hunger nor thirst for the lamb in the midst of the throne shall lead them out to springs of living water and God himself, shall wipe the tears from their eyes." Oh, well, well, it's a great God we serve. A God who was able to take that, which is low and to lift it to a higher state, a God who can take things which are not and bring to nothing things that are. Well, you see, I look for that day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord. Therefore, I work for the day when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of our Christ. Hallelujah. The Lord our God, omnipotent threeness. And he shall reign forever and ever, and ever, and by this hope we are saved right now. We are saved. Oh God, our Father, grant that not only shall we relate to our neighbor in love and being able to walk by the faith that we have accrued, but oh our God, give us hope. A hope that reaches beyond the grave, but a hope also that sustains us in the many situations of life in which we find ourselves today. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. (instrumental music)