



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

*Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person*

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Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Children's Ministry Coordinator	Terry Anderson
Parish Administrator	Barbara Bash
Sexton	John Bryant

✠ *In Worship Today* ✠

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Lector and Intercessor	Jacqui Darroch

*This service of worship can also be listened to online on our website.*

*Go to [queenannelutheran.org](http://queenannelutheran.org) and click on "WORD OUT" to find audio, video, and print resources for worship at home, as well as resources to use with children.*

*Visit our YouTube channel for other worship services, educational forums, music and messages for children, and other organ music.*

## THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

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April 18, 2021

A "Word Out" audio transcript



### Prelude

*Chorale improvisation on NOËL NOUVELET  
Paul Manz (1919–2009)*

### Welcome

**P:** Welcome, this third Sunday of Easter, to Queen Anne Lutheran Church. Wherever you are listening, whatever challenges you might be facing, we invite you into this space: one where you can hear the good news in proclamation, spoken and sung; a time where you can be still, and know God is God.

The gospel for the third Sunday of Easter is one in which the risen Christ shares food with the disciples, explaining to them the meaning of his suffering, death and resurrection. Understandably, these disciples are amazed by what they see and hear: the tangible presence of Christ in their midst. We, too, are invited to seek and find Christ when we gather in His name.


### Greeting


**P:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

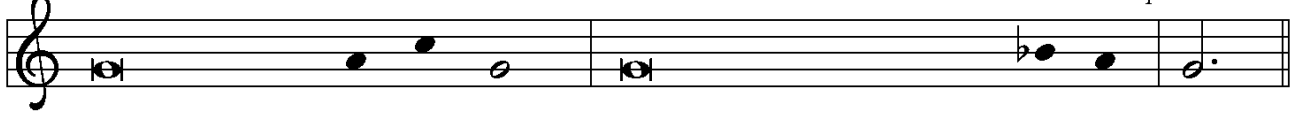
**G:** And also with you.

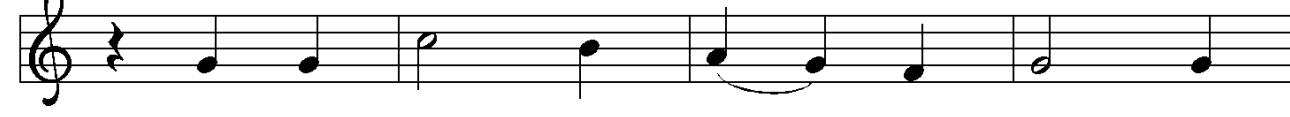
# Gospel Acclamation

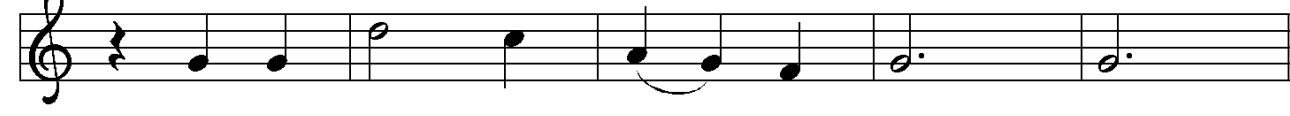
Luke 24:32

**G:**   
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

**A:**   
Our hearts burn within us while you open to us the scriptures

**G:**   
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

*Repeat alleluia*

# The Holy Gospel:

Luke 24:36b-48

**A:** The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the twenty-fourth chapter.

**G:** **Glory to you, O Lord.**

**A:** <sup>36b</sup>Jesus himself stood among [the disciples] and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>37</sup>They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. <sup>38</sup>He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup>Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." <sup>40</sup>And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup>While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

<sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup>and he took it and ate in their presence.

<sup>44</sup>Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup>and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things.”

**P**: The Gospel of the Lord.

**C**: Praise to you, O Christ.

**Sermon**

*Until the Last Day, All We Have is Love*

Pastor Dan Peterson

## **Until the Last Day, All We Have is Love**

The Bible, says Christian author and former megachurch pastor Rob Bell, did not fall leather-bound from the sky. Instead, it took centuries before the 66 books we now call Holy Scripture finally came into being.

We have evidence supporting this in today’s Gospel reading. When Jesus tells his disciples “that everything written about [him] in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44), he provides a snapshot of where the process of *canonization* was when the Gospel of Luke was written.

The term *canonization* can be misleading. In Roman Catholic circles, it refers to the process by which a person becomes a saint. It has a different meaning, however, when speaking about the emergence of the Bible. Here it refers to the set of texts or books a religious community (e.g., Jewish or Christian) considers authoritative. When said community “closes its canon,” this means they cease to accept any other texts as equally authoritative or holy.

I like to think of the canon as the greatest (literary) hits of a given faith tradition. For Jews, these hits ultimately amounted to 39 books in three categories: Torah, which refers to the first five books of the Bible, the Prophets, and the Writings. The last of these – the Writings – include a variety of genres ranging from wisdom literature (that is, advice for living righteously) to poetry.

When Jesus mentions “the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms,” in today’s reading, we can see exactly where the process of canon formation was in the mid-80s of the first century when Luke’s Gospel was written. By that time, the Jews had come to regard as authoritative the Torah or “law of Moses,” the Prophets, and the Psalms. All the remaining books that now appear among the Writings, including Job, Ecclesiastes, and Esther, had yet to be accepted. They were still under dispute.

The decision to admit these books and seal or close the canon would not occur until the turn of the first century. “Prior to that time,” as Rabbi Reuven Hammer observes, “only the contents of the first two sections of the Hebrew Bible, the Torah and the Prophets, had been formulated” (*Akiva: Life, Legend, Legacy*, p. 95).

The Bible, in short, did not fall leather-bound from the sky. The Jews took eons to collect and organize the books that now comprise what we as Christians call the Old Testament. This process, long and sometimes contentious, gave us the most influential collection of texts in Western history. For all of us who consider this collection authoritative or even holy, the saying is sure: most things worth having are worth the wait!

## **The Song of Songs**

The most contentious chapter of choosing the Hebrew Bible’s greatest hits came arguably at the end. Two books up for adoption found themselves in the eye of a rabbinical storm: Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs.

Until the end of the first century, Hammer writes, “these books had been considered controversial. Ecclesiastes contains ideas about God and piety that appear to conflict with normative biblical views and frequently contains

inherent contradictions as well, while Song of Songs can easily be read as an erotic poem, and indeed was" (ibid., 95).

The Song of Songs bore an additional problem. Unlike Ecclesiastes, which spoke of God and human existence in rather bleak and unconventional ways, Song of Songs never even mentioned God. The rabbis, in turn, had to "rescue" the Song of Songs by maintaining that the romantic love it celebrates between a man and a woman was actually an *allegory* for the relationship God has with Israel!

In the end the strategy worked. Song of Songs became, following the Book of Esther, the only other text in the Hebrew Bible never to speak of God. The author's descriptive account of the erotic interplay between two lovers made it what J. Cheryl Exum in the *Women's Bible Commentary* calls "a feast for the senses" (p. 248), one that provides the only instance in the entire Hebrew Bible of non-coercive love between a man and a woman (ibid., p. 251). No wonder the rabbis *subdued* it by insisting the account was "really" about God and Israel, just as the Christians would insist by claiming it was "really" about Christ and the soul.

Today, given the content of the Song, it may come as no surprise that not a single reading from it appears in our lectionary. Perhaps the lectionary's editors foresaw the scandal that would almost assuredly ensue if a minister read from – and then expounded upon – a line like chapter 5:4, a text so erotically charged that few preachers would escape censure for explicating it.

The only "appropriate" setting for the Song of Songs in church would be a wedding, and the only "appropriate" passage would be the Springtime Rhapsody of chapter two. There the male lover addresses his companion first with a command and then with a comparison. "Arise, my love, my fair one," he says, "and come away; for now the winter is past and the rain is over and gone" (2:10b-11). "Arise, my love, my fair one," he repeats a few verses later, "and come away" (2:13b).

These are beautiful words. When we reserve them, and *only* them, for wedding services, however, I submit we do so at our peril. As Christians, especially on

the other side of the Me Too movement, we must affirm the non-coercive form of love the Song of Songs celebrates, and the exclusive way to do that is to engage the text! When we do, we encounter a multitude of surprises, not least of which I found tucked away in the final chapter: a glimpse of God.

## God is Love

Of course, I am not alone in my discovery. A handful of biblical scholars and modern translators see it, too, in the sixth verse of the eighth chapter.

In Songs 8:6, the female protagonist anticipates the return of her beloved by declaring that “love is as strong as death, [and] passion as fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame.” Notice how the experience of love, exquisitely detailed in the seven preceding chapters of the narrative, is raised to the status of a metaphysical truth – that is, a statement regarding the ultimate nature of things. *Love as such may not have the power to overcome death, but on this side of the grave it constitutes the only power capable of resisting it.*

Consider the great lengths to which any of us will go out of love – romantic, brotherly, or otherwise. Love compels us to accompany a spouse or a sibling through the darkest valley of terminal illness. It enables a parent to meet every need of a sick or suffering child. It empowers us, citing now the testimony of Paul, to “bear all things” and to “endure all things” (1 Corinthians 3:7).

Yet only one form of love can go beyond *enduring* all things to *conquering* them, namely, the love of God.

When our translation, the New Revised Standard Version, equates love with “a raging flame” in the final words of Songs 8:6, it obscures a nuance in the original language. The Hebrew Bible scholar Tod Linafelt unveils it: “-yah,” he observes, “the last syllable of the last word of the verse, is a shortened form of Israel’s personal name for God” (Kearney qtd. Linafelt, *Toward a Theology of Eros*, p. 308). The (almost) almighty flame is thus the flame of Yahweh – the flame of God.

I like the International Standard translation best: “The flames of love are flames of fire, a blaze that comes from the LORD.”

## The Good News

I say the (almost) almighty flame for a reason. Even God has God's limits. The divine flame, by working here and now within the confines of the old creation, can only enable us to resist death. It cannot overcome it. The resurrection, on the other hand, testifies to a kind of love, fully incarnate, that can.

After Jesus, having defeated death, encounters his disciples in our Gospel reading for today, he says, "Peace be with you" (Luke 24:36). These are words of victory. They suggest that the battle with death has been fought and won. Christ in his risen form constitutes the "first fruits" of a new creation where death has been banished and the flame, the mighty love of Yah, has become "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:20, 28).

The triumph of God's love – the last day, the consummation of all things – lies ahead of us all. Only then will God "wipe the tears away from every eye, and Death shall be no more (Revelation 21:4)." In the meantime, "the only force to pit against Death is Love" (Marvin Pope, *The Song of Songs*, p. 669).

Love, at least for now, is all we have.

Let us, therefore, love one another, knowing that when we do the flame of Yahweh flickers within each of us.

## Conclusion

When Luke wrote his account of the risen Christ, the canon was not yet completed, nor was the fate of the Old Testament's most "scandalous" text certain. Yet this text, the Song of Songs, together with the resurrection, confirm in varying degrees that love not only enables us to bear and to endure all things presently; in the end, as Rob Bell would say, *love wins*.

May the promise of this love, the flame of Yahweh, its present manifestation and its ultimate victory be yours, this Sunday, and every Sunday.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.



Hymn of the Day

*Now the Green Blade Rises*

ELW 379



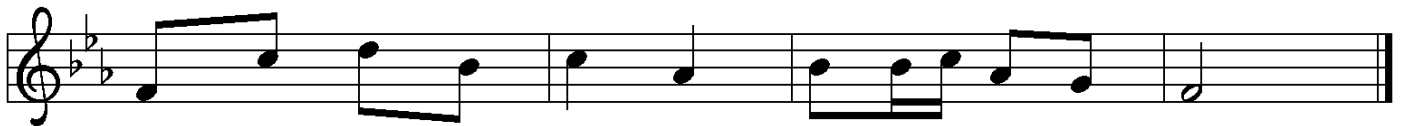
1 Now the green blade ris - es from the bur - ied grain,  
2 In the grave they laid him, love by ha - tred slain,  
3 Forth he came at Eas - ter like the ris - en grain,  
4 When our hearts are win - try, griev - ing, or in pain,



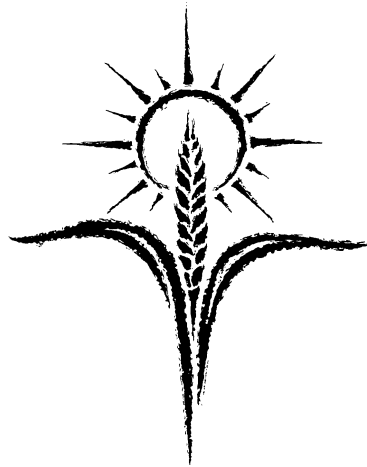
wheat that in dark earth man - y days has lain;  
think - ing that he would nev - er wake a - gain,  
he that for three days in the grave had lain;  
your touch can call us back to life a - gain,



love lives a - gain, that with the dead has been;  
laid in the earth like grain that sleeps un - seen;  
raised from the dead, my liv - ing Lord is seen;  
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been;



love is come a - gain like wheat a - ris - ing green.



## Prayers of the Church

**A:** Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

*A brief silence.*

**A:** Living God, in the midst of Easter joy we are still filled with questions and wondering. Open our hearts and minds as we encounter the scriptures, so that the church embodies repentance and forgiveness in the name of Jesus to all nations. Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** Creating God, like a master artist you have fashioned the universe out of your love and delight. Heal your creation where it is in need of restoration. Provide all the inhabitants of earth a peaceful and sustainable home. Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** God of all, the nations hunger and thirst for your righteousness. Many call on you for guidance and strength. Answer their hopes with the peace of Christ and give your lovingkindness to national, state, and local leaders of people. Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** Healing God, you hear the cries of those in need and answer them in their distress. Grant to those who are sick and suffering your compassion and nurse them back to health and wholeness. Be close to the hearts of the lonely. Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** Loving Parent, you have given us such love that we should be called the children of God. Reveal yourself to us so that we in this community of faith will become more and more like you in our mutual love and bold witness. Lord, in your mercy,

**G:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** For whom or what else do the people of God pray?

*A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.*

**A:** Lord, in your mercy,

**C:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** God of all times and ages, those who have died in you now see you as you are. We thank you for their lives among us. Assure us of the peace you have promised, so that we may join them in everlasting life.

Lord, in your mercy,

**C:** **hear our prayer.**

**A:** In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C:** **Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

**P:** Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**C:** **Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread**

**and 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 forever.**

**Amen.**

### **Announcements**

**P:** We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services or access the newest edition of *the Quill*, our newsletter, we invite you to go to our website at [queenannelutheran.org](http://queenannelutheran.org).

**P**: Receive now the blessing:

### **Benediction**

**A**: Let us bless the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**P**: Almighty God, the Father, † the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
bless and preserve you.

**G**: Amen.

### **Dismissal**

**P**: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**G**: Thanks be to God.

### **Postlude**

*Chorale fantasy* on GAUDEAMUS PARITER  
Robert Buckley Farlee (b. 1950)

### **About today's music**

Today's organ prelude and postlude draw from the contemporary classical music sounds of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The late Paul Manz is regarded as a giant among modern American organists, noted especially for his innovative short improvisations that often served as introductions to hymns. Manz had a knack for breathing new life into both melody and text of his source material. The opening and closing sections of today's prelude on the traditional French melody of "Now the Green Blade Rises" (ELW 379) employ a 3-part texture, with staggered statements of the tune in each hand and the feet; the piece ends with a playful and modern-sounding final chord. Today's postlude, a fantastical treatment of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century tune for "Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain" (ELW 363) by Robert Buckley Farlee, is both jaunty and joyful. An accomplished musician, composer, and ordained Lutheran pastor, Farlee is presently one of two cantors at Christ Church in Minneapolis, where he has served in multiple capacities (including associate pastor, choir director, organist, resident composer, and visual artist) since 1981. Since 2001 Farlee has also served as Senior Worship Editor at Augsburg Fortress Publishers, the publishing house of the ELCA.

— *Cantor Kyle*