November 15, 2026 + 10:30 A.M.
Twenty-Sixth Sunday of Pentecost

We Join in Worship

Liturgist: Carol Calloway

If you need extra space for a wheelchair or walker, or if you have young children with you, please feel free to make use of our Prayground, the extra space across the aisle from the sound booth.

PRELUDE Holy God, We Praise Thy Name — Ignaz Franz/Clarence Walworth

WELCOME

CHORAL INTROIT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

***CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Psalm* 123)

Leader: As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, until the Lord our God has mercy upon us.

ALL: To you we lift up our eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!

Leader: Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt.

ALL: To you we lift up our eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!

Leader: Our soul has had more than its fill of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.

ALL: To you we lift up our eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! We worship you, O Lord our God!

***OPENING HYMN:** "When Morning Gilds the Skies" (487)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

Leader: In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes, "You yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake." Together let us confess how we have fallen asleep when we should have stayed awake.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of grace and mercy, we pray to you with confession on our lips and repentance in our hearts. We confess that we have fallen asleep when we should have been vigilant. We have been hypnotized by sirens calling us to give away our gifts and talents cheaply to earthly masters. We give them away to consumerism. We give them away to distractions. We give them away to corporations and institutions that exploit. We give them away to meaningless pursuits. Forgive us for being lulled by these influences. Help us to use our talents for you, not to waste them and not to bury them. In the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, we pray. Amen.

KYRIE

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Friends, hear the good news! God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.

ALL: Through Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!

GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

STATEMENT OF FAITH: (From *The Heidelberg Catechism*)

Leader: What do you understand by "the communion of saints"?

ALL: First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts. Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.

We Hear God's Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Guide us, O God, by your Word and Spirit, that in your light we may see light, in your truth find wisdom, and in your will discover your peace. In the name of Jesus Christ our risen Lord we pray. Amen.

HEBREW BIBLE LESSON: *Psalm* 90:1-11

EPISTLE LESSON: *1 Thessalonians* 5:1-11

GOSPEL LESSON: *Matthew* 25:14-30

SERMON: Playing It Safe

MUSICAL MEDITATION: *Make Me an Instrument of Thy Peace* Mary McDonald

We Respond in Faith

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERING INVITATION:

Leader: We are a community of many resources and talents. Let us dedicate ourselves once again to committing these resources and talents to the mission of our one true Lord. Please place your offering in the plate as it is passed. If you are worshiping from home, please mail in your checks or use our online giving option on the website. Let us practice stewardship as we listen to today's offertory.

OFFERTORY More Precious Than Silver Lynn DeShazo

***DOXOLOGY (592)**
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! Amen.

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION:** (Unison)
God of grace and mercy, we dedicate our resources and talents to the work of your Kingdom. Guide us to use them in a way that brings you glory and serves your children well. We pray in the name of your son Jesus Christ. Amen.

We Go into the World

***CLOSING HYMN:** "If Thou but Trust in God to Guide Thee" (282)

BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE My Faith Looks Up To Thee Ray Palmer/Lowell Mason

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PEEK AT THE WEEK:

SUNDAY 11/15:	Adult Study – 9:00 AM
	Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM
MONDAY 11/16:	GA – 6:30 PM
	Al-Anon – 7:00 PM
TUESDAY 11/17:	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH)
	AA – 7:30 PM
WEDNESDAY 11/18:	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH)
	"Bring Your Own Bible" Bible Study 7-8 PM (Zoom)
	GA – 7:00 PM
THURSDAY 11/19:	Choir – 7:00 PM
SATURDAY 11/21:	Sharon's Table Prep
	AA – 6:30 PM
SUNDAY 11/22:	COMMITMENT SUNDAY
	Adult Study – 9:00 AM
	Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM
	Luncheon & Bake Sale
	HANGING OF THE GREENS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **PLEDGE CARDS WERE SENT NOVEMBER 5TH** Keep your eyes out for this year's pledge cards and stewardship campaign letter if you have not already received them! We ask that you bring the pledge cards back for Commitment Sunday, November 22.
- **MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR NOVEMBER 22ND!** There will be a luncheon after worship to celebrate our collective generosity on Commitment Sunday! **There also will be a bake sale** featuring pies, breads and other sweets. Please consider sticking around to **hang the greens for Advent as well!**
- **INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING WORSHIP SERVICE** This annual event will be held at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Munster on November 24 at 7:00 PM. This is a meaningful opportunity to join our neighbors in giving thanks to God!
- **"BYOB"** (Bring Your Own Bible) discussion group meets on Wednesday evenings from 7-8 pm online using Zoom. Each week this group takes a look at the scriptures from our Sunday worship services, asking questions, bringing up different perspectives, and hopefully encountering the Holy Spirit in a fresh way. The link for the Zoom meetings is emailed out weekly. If you're not familiar with how to use Zoom, or to get on our e-mail list, please contact Pastor Tyler or Heather Casiano. All belong! You can join even if you have never done so before!
- **"THE BIBLE IN TODAY'S WORLD"** study class meets on Sunday mornings from 9-10 am at the church. We are excited to be using the study guide *United through Christ, Bound to Each Other: Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*. If you have any questions, contact Heather Casiano. All are welcome! You can join even if you have never done so before!
- **FELLOWSHIP HOSTING** We are asking folks to sign up to host fellowship time. Hosting entails bringing a simple snack to share, setting it out, and cleaning up afterwards. On Sundays with no sign-ups, we will still have coffee and tea to enjoy.
- **CHOIR PRACTICE IS THURSDAYS AT 7PM** We need singers of all sorts and welcome singers of all skill levels! We have a great time, and singing is a great way to give glory to God!
- **FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!** If you don't already follow us on Facebook and Instagram, please start doing so @firstpchighland on both Facebook and Instagram.
- **INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF FPCH?** You are always welcome here, whether a member or not! If you are interested in joining as a member, though, we would love to have you! Please talk to Pastor Tyler if you would like to learn more.

Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:

- **BLESSING BOX** Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates!
- **HELP STOCK OUR PANTRY!** Please bring non-perishable foods to help the church's food pantry.
- **GOT SNEAKERS?** The sneakers that we all collect will help raise money to support our church's general fund AND will help our environment by keeping sneakers out of landfills. Bring the sneakers (athletic shoes only) to the church and put them in one of the blue bins by Door D or in the narthex.

Prayer List

Anthony
Brady Vanes
George Griner
Guy Hendricks
David Markley
David Kingen
Diana and Ray Mendoza
Janet Orem
Cindy Waltz and Sister
Yvonne Suroviak
Georgette and Garry Sknerski
Jakob Holden
Denise Matthys
Florance Cody
Kathy & Chuck Pumnea
Kevin and Annie Windstrup
Rick Parker
Gary Everhart
Darlene O'Brien
Doug & Sue Matthews
Janet Terpstra
Glen Nahler
Tom
David Hamblin
Jana Tolley
Larry & Bonnie Perryman
Delta Rose
Winnie Owen
Breeanne
Mom Bechtler

Marian Clayton
Ella P
Rita Stronczek
Keren, Zuriel, and Gedeon
Edna Cruz
Charlie
Jerry & Rena Martinez
Luana Sulkowski
Sonny Buono
Tammy
Mike Kelly
Sue Heth
Oscar Ochoa
Jean and Clara
Dave Shelborne
Kali Rosalia
Wendy
Jessica S
Shirley McKnight
Kay Johnson
Brooke
Arlene
Shelley
John
Pastor Laurel
Rosie
Guy Hendricks
Rick Parker

Psalm 90:1-11

[1] Lord, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.
[2] Before the mountains were brought forth
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

[3] You turn us back to dust
and say, "Turn back, you mortals."
[4] For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past
or like a watch in the night.

[5] You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;
[6] in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.

[7] For we are consumed by your anger;
by your wrath we are overwhelmed.
[8] You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

[9] For all our days pass away under your wrath;
our years come to an end like a sigh.
[10] The days of our life are seventy years
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;
even then their span is only toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

[11] Who considers the power of your anger?
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

5 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. **2** For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **3** When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! **4** But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; **5** for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. **6** So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; **7** for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. **8** But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. **9** For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, **10** who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. **11** Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Matthew 25:14-30

14 "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned those enslaved by him and entrusted his property to
them; 15 to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he
went away. 16 The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five
more talents. 17 In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. 18 But the one who had
received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 After a long time
the master of those enslaved people came and settled accounts with them. 20 Then the one who had received the
five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I
have made five more talents.' 21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been
trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 22 And
the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have
made two more talents.' 23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been
trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 24 Then
the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man,
reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; 25 so I was afraid, and I went and
hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' 26 But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy
slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? 27 Then you ought
to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with
interest. 28 So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29 For to all those who have,
more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have
will be taken away. 30 As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be
weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Talented Resistance

Judges 4:1-7; *Psalm* 90; *1 Thessalonians* 5:1-11; *Matthew* 25:14-30

Last week we explored what it means to choose the LORD, as Yehoshua son of Nun and his household did. We talked about how choosing the LORD means choosing loyalty to a Kingdom that runs on a platform far better than any of our political parties—a platform that subverts power structures, prioritizes the poor, comforts the grieving, blesses peacemakers, welcomes strangers, and struggles for justice. With Yehoshua son of Mary's clarion call to this Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount, you might feel a bit of whiplash when hearing this same savior telling a parable about slavery. If you do feel that whiplash, you are not alone. After spending months on the story of the Exodus, of God's liberation of the Israelites from slavery, how could we then have the very Son of God and a descendent of those same Israelites speaking a parable that seems to accept slavery on its face? How could this be? Well, let's get to the bottom of it.

One of the best classes I took in seminary was called Postcolonial Readings of the New Testament with the brilliant professor Dr. Raj Nadella. In this class we took a deep dive into trying to understand the contextual realities surrounding the life of Jesus—specifically the realities of life for the Jewish community colonized by the Roman Empire. Some of the people of Judaea would have had some regional and relative power—people like the Herods and the temple leaders and some of the local magistrates. But by and large the Jews of Judea would have been fisher people, farmers, and day laborers living under the thumb of an Empire that was stealing the fruits of their labor, exploiting their land for strategic expansion and protection purposes, and forcing them into compliance with a constant, disproportionate military presence. In truth, the contextual reality of first century Palestine was very similar to the contextual reality for Palestinians today. It was a system of apartheid, with Roman citizens having absolute power and the people of Judaea having no structural power.

Even though they did not have structural power, however, they certainly had people power! I mean, look at the power of the Jesus movement! Multitudes of people dared to follow and listen to a rabble raising radical rabbi who was preaching a Kingdom diametrically opposed to the way of the Empire—that same Kingdom to which we are still called to pledge our loyalty today. These people risked the full wrath of the Roman military

in order to learn about the Law of Love and so to live as a community outside of the norms and dictates of the Empire. Rich and poor, local and immigrant, healthy and sick, men and women, young and old, able and disabled, all mixed and mingled and formed family-like community together. They shared freely of their resources, each according to what they had. They ate meals together. They worshipped a God who was bigger than the Roman Emperor, that contemporary Pharaoh. And so they became a community of resistance, a community without structural power standing up to an Empire with absolute power over their land, their labor, and their resources.

And that brings us to today's confusing, whiplashing parable of the enslaved people. Back in that seminary class I mentioned, I started exploring the possibility that some parables are actually descriptive rather than prescriptive. This means that there are some parables that were spoken to give insight into the realities of the world as it was, not just parables giving some insight into a future Kingdom of Heaven. These descriptive parables, the ones describing the world as it was, lack the common introductory phrases of "The Kingdom of Heaven is like this," or "The Kingdom of Heaven will be like this," or "The Kingdom of God is like this." We heard just such an introduction last week with the parable of the sleeping bridesmaids. Our parable today, on the other hand, begins simply like this: "For it is as if…" "For it is." In other words, "These are the way things are." And it continues: "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned those enslaved by him and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away."

Thus follows this story of three enslaved people forced to maintain their enslaver's property while at the same time increasing his financial yield. The word "talent" in this story refers to a coin or sum of money. One enslaved person is given five talents, and he manages to double that amount through trade. One is given two talents and also manages to double the amount. The third, though, is only given one talent. He buries it in the ground and thus yields no profit. When the enslaver returns, he praises and rewards the first two. With the third, though, he is absolutely livid. He scolds him for failing to increase the enslaver's profit, takes even that one talent away from him, and casts him out into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Because most of us have been taught to read parables solely as insight into the Kingdom of God and therefore God's way of operating, I imagine that most of us have heard the moral of this story to be something along the lines of this: Make good use of your gifts and resources. Be strategic in how you use them so that they can grow and become even more effective. And if you do these things, God will reward you.

That all sounds nice until you start to really think about it. That interpretation requires that we think of God as an enslaver. That interpretation requires us to view God as somebody who abides by the maxim: "To all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away." That interpretation requires us to believe in a vindictive, hateful, enslaving God. Such an interpretation doesn't square at all with the God preached and embodied by Yehoshua son of Mary! It doesn't square at all with the God who meets us with love and grace every moment of every day!

If this parable is not giving us insight into God and God's relationship with us, then what exactly is the point of it? Going back to this idea of descriptive parables, perhaps it is giving us insight into what was actually going on in the world! Perhaps it is describing a nasty, vindictive, hateful Roman enslaver. Perhaps it is describing the nastiest, most vindictive, most hateful Roman enslaver of all—the emperor—the emperor who took the Jews' land, exploited their resources, and forced them to hand over the fruits of their labor—the emperor who was "a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed." If this was the case, then perhaps Jesus was telling his followers a very different story. Perhaps he was telling them the story of a person with no structural power who dared to resist an enslaver with absolute structural power. Let's see what happens if we read it that way!

An enslaver spent years beating down the people he had enslaved. He forced them into labor. He used physical violence against them. He abused them verbally, emotionally, and spiritually. At some point he had to go on a trip. When he did so, he decided to exploit these enslaved people even further by trying to get them to get him more money by working outside in addition to completing all of their labors on his land. Because this enslaver was notorious for his harshness, two of them went through with what was expected in order to survive

and protect themselves from even further harm. One of them, though, decided to resist. He took this talent and buried it in the ground. And when the enslaver came back, he gave him nothing but that single talent. He gave to Caesar what belonged to Caesar and nothing else!

Yes, this interpretation makes much more sense! Yehoshua son of Mary spoke to a crowd of people living under the cruel colonial reality of a violent emperor. And in speaking to them, he gave them an image that would help them to understand their situation. He revealed to them just how bad things were. He urged them to open up their eyes to the truth of the matter. And he showed them a brilliant way to resist. Do what you must to survive, but do not expend additional energy or resources for the sake of the emperor. And when he comes to collect, give him only that which is his. Explain yourself by pointing to the emperor's own notoriety for cruelty.

With this parable, Jesus very cleverly and very subversively inspired hope in the people. They would have recognized that he saw them, understood them, and was ready to fight for them. They would have felt a thrill in their guts about the possibility of not only surviving but actually thriving by resisting the Empire—by withholding labor and resources and only giving to Caesar what belonged to Caesar. Maybe some of them even would have foreseen that this radical rabbi before them would himself be buried in the ground one day like that fateful talent and then come out of the ground to teach that cruel emperor a lesson! Jesus himself certainly knew that this was coming! And from that seed being planted, a Kingdom would grow which would defy the very essence of empires—a Kingdom that, as we will learn next week, is built on the foundations of sharing food with the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, providing clothes for the naked, caring for the sick, and visiting the incarcerated—in short, a Kingdom built on love instead of fear, on equity instead of power.
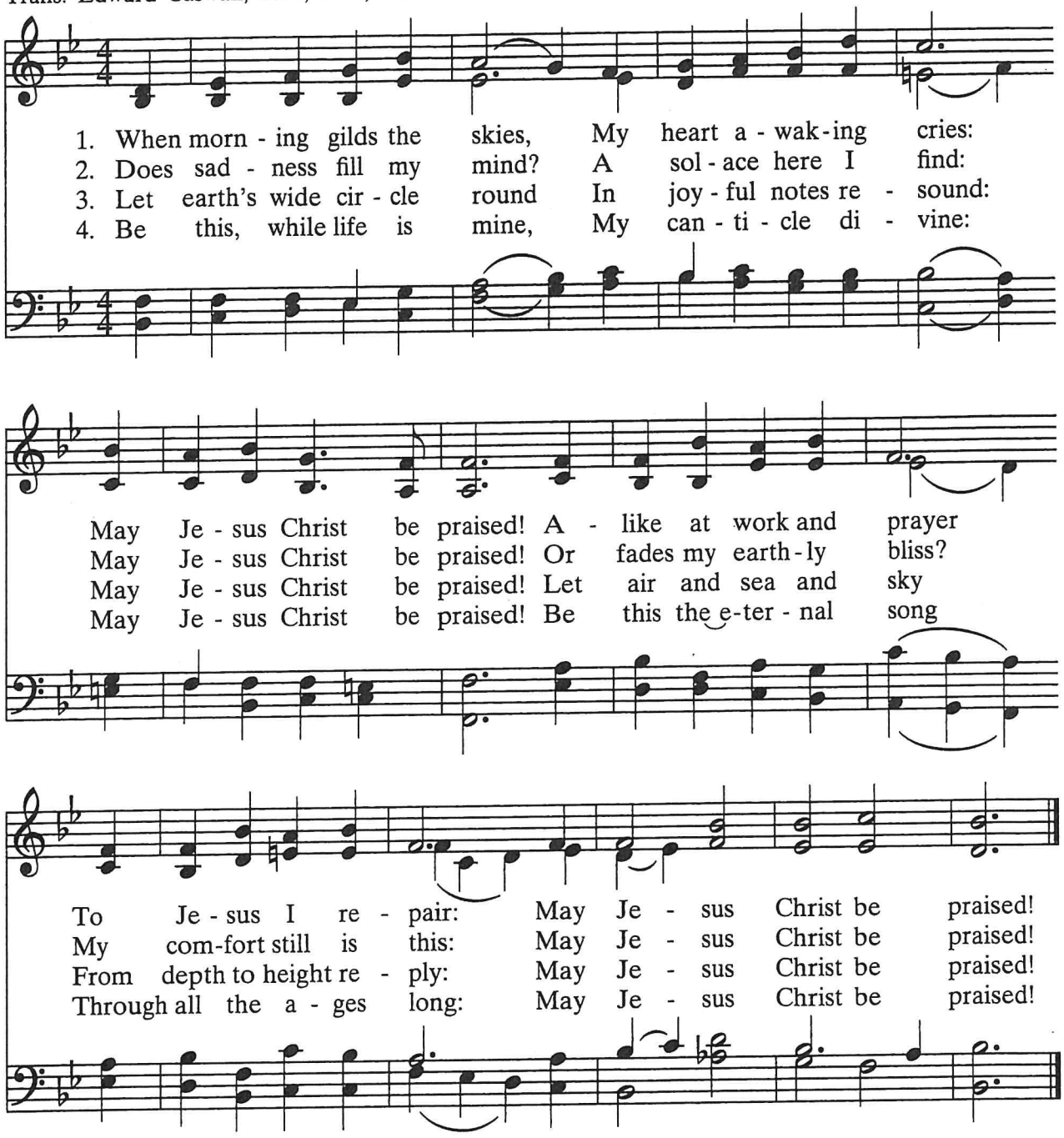
Friends, this has been a very exegetical sermon. I have spent a lot of time with you going over and over this passage, presenting different interpretations, and sharing my preferred analysis. Thank you for sticking it out with me! At this point you may be asking, "So what? What does this have to do with us?" Well, let me suggest that although the Kingdom has certainly grown and thrived in various ways, we still have a long way to go to bring it to full fruition. As the stewards of God's Creation, we have allowed the powers and principalities of the earth to persist with their ways of power and violence and exploitation. There are now billions of people living under the realities of oppression, warfare, and poverty. And yet we continue to invest in the structures and systems that cause these things. Instead of burying our coin and sticking it to the emperor, we lavish the empires with our money, our energy, our time, and our loyalty. So for that "So what?" I respond with a request. Consider what might happen if all of us, collectively, committed to giving Caesar only what belongs to Caesar and then investing the rest in community, in the Church, and in each other. Consider the possibilities if we all resisted the calls of the powers and principalities of this earth and instead committed our money, energy, time, and loyalty to finally bringing about the fullness of the Kingdom, especially as we approach Commitment Sunday next week! Consider the transformation that awaits if we nourish the seed planted by that brave person who dared to stand up to the enslaver, who dared to put up a *talented resistance*! Amen.

When Morning Gilds the Skies

LAUDES DOMINI 6.6.6 D

German hymn, c. 1800
Trans. Edward Caswall, 1853, 1858; alt.

Joseph Barnby, 1868



If Thou but Trust in God to Guide Thee 282

WER NUR DEN LIEBEN GOTT 9.8.9.8.8.8

Georg Neumark, 1657
Trans. Catherine Winkworth, 1855, 1863; alt. 1987
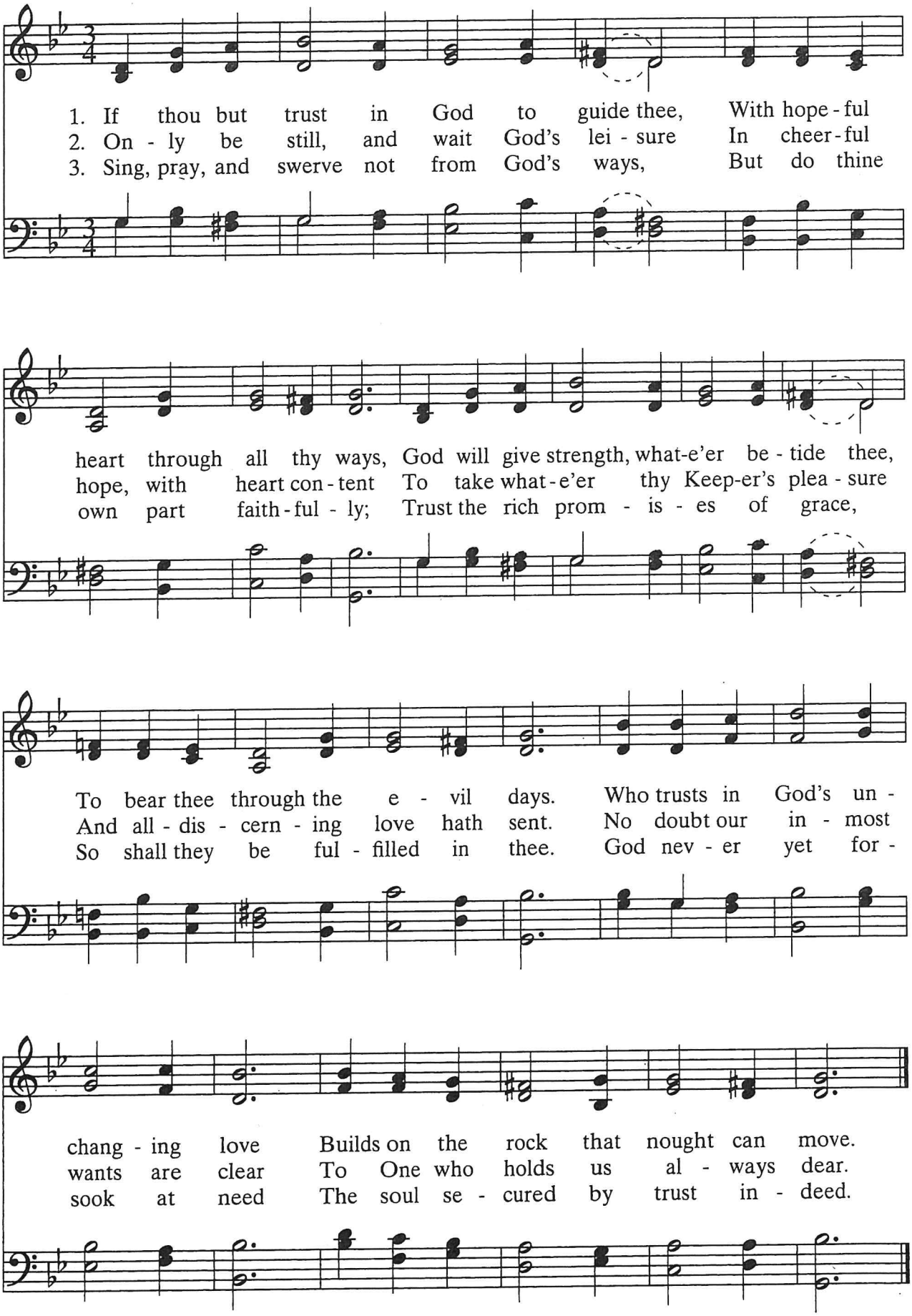
Georg Neumark, 1657

