

Down To The River To Pray

Choir

As I went down in the river to pray
Studyin' about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the starry crown?
Good Lord show me the way!
O sisters let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O sisters, let's go down,
Down in the river to pray.

Congregation hums

As I went down in the river to pray
Studyin' about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the robe & crown?
Good Lord show me the way
O brothers, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
Come on brothers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray.

Women

As I went down in the river to pray
Studyin' about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the starry crown?
Good Lord, show me the way!
O fathers let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O fathers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray.

Men

As I went down in the river to pray
Studyin' about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the robe and crown?
Good Lord show me the way.
O mothers let's go down
Come on down,
Don't you wanna go down?
Come on mothers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray.

All

As I went down in the river to pray
Studyin' about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the starry crown?
Good Lord, show me the way!
O sinners, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down,
O sinners, let's go down,
Down in the river to pray

All

As I went down in the river to pray
Studyin' about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the robe and crown?
Good Lord, show me the way!

We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

Credits

Cover art: "Christ at Emmaus." Burin and drypoint. Rembrandt (1654)

Old Orchard Church

4th Sunday after Easter

April 25, 2010 — 10:15 to 11:45 a.m.

*When Jesus was at the table with them,
he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and
began to give it to them.
Then their eyes were opened and they
recognized him, and he disappeared
from their sight.*

—Luke 24:30-31—

Celebrating Jesus Christ As the Resurrection Community of Prayer

The new human community Jesus created in dying and rising
Bears witness to its Lord
Before a world in need of the Good News of Peace.
But it also prays.

Because of Jesus' victory, achieved at the cross
and ratified in the empty tomb,
we seek the King's face in prayer—
not in the vestibule but in the throne room;
not as foreigners
but as intimate allies of the Conquering Prince
who is making all things new.

Shout prayers of praise to the risen Christ!
Ask his grace and his help
for our wounds, our fears, our needs;
And for grace to be poured out on the world.
Ascribe to Christ the thanks he deserves
for every good thing he's won for the world,
and seek his face for those promises yet unfulfilled.



Today's Scripture

Gospel Reading: Luke 24:13-31

Epistle Lesson: Acts 12:1-17

Sermon Series on Matthew

“Knowing Christ in the Power of His Resurrection”
Matthew 27:62-28:4, 11-15

Ron Lutjens, Senior Pastor, preaching

Resurrection and Prayer

The story is quite clear: in the garden at Gethsemane the Father said “No” to his Son’s prayer to be rescued from the horrific agony of the atoning cross. But three days later, in the cemetery garden where Jesus’ dead body had been buried, God raised his Son to a life-beyond-death existence, thereby revealing that his “No” to the Son’s prayer for help was really a “Yes—but not that way.” And so, the great messianic Psalm 22 proclaims triumphantly concerning the Father’s response to his Son’s prayer:

**For he has not despised or disdained
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.** (Psalm 22:24)

The resurrection of Jesus, therefore, becomes the Great Guarantee that God hears our prayers and will not, finally, hand us over to anything that would ruin us. God rescued his Son not around the cross but through it.

I’ve always regarded myself as among the “O ye of midget-faith” when it comes to prayer, but I’m finding that the older I get, the more I want to pray and the more I do pray. Yet the struggle remains what it always has been for me: my faith heats up when I quite easily imagine what God **could do** in my life and in the lives of others I pray for and in the church and in the world, given his sovereign power over things. But then it dawns on me that so many times God **doesn’t do** what I and so many others have asked for. How can I be confident that our prayers will affect what he **will do** now in this or that situation? We ask him to do this or that good thing—and he doesn’t. Then I lose confidence—and my jets start cooling. The childlike expectation of receiving something good and the excitement at “watching the Lord work” evaporates. I keep praying but the confidence that God will really act into the situation seems to have evaporated. How can I believe God for something really specific I pray for when time and time again he has demonstrated that his ways are above me, past finding out?

But if it’s true that the resurrection of the Son, in some deep and powerful way, marks the formal beginning of the fulfillment of the promise of the Father who calls himself Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, “**Behold, I am making all things new**” (Revelation 21:5), then I must pray on, and put my confidence not in the number of specific prayers God answers for me—which easily turns into a “he loves me, he loves me not” kind of thing—but in God’s actual desire and determination to make all things new. He has set the resurrected Christ before you and me as the first installment of a New Creation. And everywhere in the world he’s at work, as we were so wonderfully reminded at House Church a few weeks ago in Wilma Cross’s report on the progress of the gospel in Chile. God is serious about what he has promised us. And when we contemplate that, we will find—even though the devil uses our unanswered prayers to douse it—the fire of our faith and confidence in God heating up again.

—Ron Lutjens