

March 30, 2020

Dear Grace Family,

"How long, O Lord?" This is the cry of Psalm 13, and it is one that you have likely joined your own voice in praying these past few weeks as we long for this crisis to be over. When we rehearse our very real troubles—whether they be financial, vocational, physical/emotional, or spiritual—and ask the question "How long O Lord?" we are faced with a decision. Will we choose to listen to our fears or will we choose to press in and trust in God's ultimate faithfulness, goodness, and sovereignty? The right choice is found in the closing verses of Psalm 13:

*But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me. (Psalm 13:5-6)*

As you all know, this pandemic has taken its toll on a number of industries, which includes churches and parochial schools. We shut our preschool down when the San Diego Unified District did in mid-March. While we have made every creative attempt to keep our preschool staff paid through April, this was financially unfeasible without sufficient tuition income to offset salaries and bills. Thankfully, with the latest federal aid package, it now appears that non-profit employees are eligible for unemployment benefits, so we have made the very tough decision to lay off our preschool staff and close the school indefinitely, while providing our staff in excess of two week's pay for March and an additional week's severance along with information on applying for unemployment. This was not an easy decision to make and I want to thank our council, particularly Randy Houts and Matt Rall, for their incredible leadership and acumen to work through this. We love our preschool students, families, and staff, and it is our hope to reopen when safe to do so. Please pray for all affected by this. We are trying to make loving, yet wise decisions as we wade through uncharted waters.

We begin Holy Week this Sunday but with the extension of the national and state restrictions on safe distancing, we will not be gathering as one large church family as I had hoped. Instead, we will continue our "micro services" of 10 people or less in the side chapel as we have the past two weeks to include Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and of course, Easter. This week, however, we will be rolling over the grand piano to incorporate some singing with Michael Burke's accompaniment. Each service is approximately 25 minutes, includes a reading and pastoral devotion, as well as Holy Communion. I am taking every health precaution I can in the chapel, but I recognize some may not feel comfortable leaving their homes to join us, so we will be adding

additional resources on our [YouTube](#) station later this week to include music and Holy Week devotions by yours truly.

To sign-up for our Holy Week services, please head to our church website at [gracesandiego.com](http://gracesandiego.com) where you can find links on the home page for each service. If all time slots fill, I will add additional options.

On this holiest of weeks, crowds will pursue Jesus to see Him, hear Him, adore Him, ridicule Him, and finally crucify Him. The sequence from popularity to persecution unfolds on this Sunday of the Passion. Hosanna accolades would be stifled by jeering mockery. The imagery of palm branches would be obscured with the bloodied palms of Jesus' nail-pierced hands. Within the span of a week, the story moves from beauty and fame to scorn and shame. For us, He decidedly unravels death's hideous sting!

In Christ's Service and Yours,

Pastor Thomas

### **Resources for the Sunday of the Passion (April 5, 2020)**

#### **Collect of the Day:**

Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

#### **Readings:**

Isaiah 50:4-9

Philippians 2:5-11

Matthew 26:1-27

**Hymn of the Day:** All Glory, Laud, and Honor (LSB 442)

**Giving Online**

- Go to [gracesandiego.churchcenter.com/giving](https://gracesandiego.churchcenter.com/giving) to create an account and make a donation. You can set it to give just once or on a recurring schedule. You will also have the opportunity to cover the processing fees for your gift.
- You can also now give via text message on your phone. Go to the giving link: [gracesandiego.churchcenter.com/givingor](https://gracesandiego.churchcenter.com/givingor) scan the QR code from a recent bulletin with any smartphone camera and text a dollar amount (e.g., \$50) to the number 84321. Once your account is set up and tied to your mobile number, sending a simple text with an amount will trigger a donation from your desired payment method (bank account or credit card).