



# THE LONGEST NIGHT

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2020

7PM | JOIN ONLINE

How long, Lord?

Psalm 13:1

## Welcome

As you prepare for tonight, please collect some candles, a lighting source, and communion supplies (bread or crackers, and juice). You may want to turn down the lights in your house to create a different atmosphere and prepare a space that is cozy and welcoming.

[Click here](#) to pray with a Prayer Minister throughout the service (via Zoom).

## Opening Refrain

*The kingdom is yours, the kingdom is yours  
Hold on a little more, this is not the end  
Hope is in the Lord, keep your eyes on him*

## Scripture Reading—Psalm 13

**NIV:** How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? <sup>2</sup> How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? <sup>3</sup> Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, <sup>4</sup> and my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,” and my foes will rejoice when I fall. <sup>5</sup> But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. <sup>6</sup> I will sing the Lord’s praise, for he has been good to me.

**THE MESSAGE:** Long enough, God—you’ve ignored me long enough. I’ve looked at the back of your head long enough. Long enough I’ve carried this ton of trouble, lived with a stomach full of pain. Long enough my arrogant enemies have looked down their noses at me. Take a good look at me, God, my God; I want to look life in the eye, So no enemy can get the best of me or laugh when I fall on my face. I’ve thrown myself headlong into your arms—I’m celebrating your rescue. I’m singing at the top of my lungs, I’m so full of answered prayers.

## Song – All Who Are Thirsty/ O Come O Come Emmanuel

WRITTEN BY BRENTON BROWN

All who are thirsty  
All who are weak  
Come to the fountain  
Dip your heart in the stream of life  
Let the pain and the sorrow  
Be washed away  
In the waves of His mercy  
As deep cries out to deep

Come Lord Jesus, come

Holy Spirit, Come

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel.  
Shall come to Thee O Israel*

## Our Grief

### Prayers Of the People

**READER:** For those who've struggled with Covid: with seeing loved ones die from this virus, or surviving it yourself; with the genuine fear tied to not knowing where it lingers and how to avoid it; with desire for restoration, healing, and for hope and health to return to our land once again.

**ALL:** HOW LONG, O LORD?

**READER:** For racial violence: for deep rooted grief surrounding a system of injustice; for blind eyes and deaf ears; for those anointed

to promote truth and justice who have forgotten their call; for valued communities who feel forgotten and unloved, but who you call your beloved.

**ALL:** HOW LONG, O LORD?

**READER:** For division between loved ones, family members, political parties; for threats, hurtful words and hurt feelings.

**ALL:** HOW LONG, O LORD?

**READER:** For depression, loneliness, shorter days and darker nights, suicidal thoughts, nonstop anxiety, voices of accusation, little to no affection or face-to-face contact, a lack of hospitality, shared meals, and opportunities to grow as a community; for children isolated from classroom settings, couples at their wits' end, singles and elderly alone for far too long.

**ALL:** HOW LONG, O LORD?

**READER:** For coming into the Holidays with painful memories of the past and/or a lack of hope for the future.

**ALL:** HOW LONG, O LORD?

## SILENCE



## Song – The Kingdom is Yours

COMMON HYMNAL

Blessed are the ones who do not bury  
All the broken pieces of their heart  
Blessed are the tears of all the weary  
Pouring like a sky of falling stars

Blessed are the wounded ones in mourning  
Brave enough to show the Lord their scars  
Blessed are the hurts that are not hidden  
Open to the healing touch of God

### CHORUS

*The kingdom is yours, the kingdom is yours  
Hold on a little more, this is not the end  
Hope is in the Lord, keep your eyes on him*

Blessed are the ones who walk in kindness  
Even in the face of great abuse  
Blessed are the deeds that go unnoticed  
Serving with unguarded gratitude

Blessed are the ones who fight for justice  
Longing for the coming day of peace  
Blessed is the soul that thirsts for righteousness  
Welcoming the last, the lost, the least

Blessed are the ones who suffer violence  
And still have strength to love their enemies  
Blessed is the faith of those who persevere  
Though they fall, they'll never know defeat

## Wake Of the Storm

Shattered windows that we are, strangers  
look through us. Bullied by the wind, we are the dislocated,  
out of socket. Stories that continue after the headlines  
have exhausted themselves. We are the families evicted  
by the ocean: the deep has dragged its bloated belly  
over the seawall, invited itself into our homes. Our throats  
are filled with sand. What good is faith  
if it doesn't bring a shovel? What's the point of  
prayer if not to clear away debris and show us  
what we're standing on?

We are battered boats  
washed up in the streets. Our landscape has dissolved.  
The bench on which we once ate ice cream, bolted  
to the wood that was the boardwalk, so many summers  
now sitting in a driveway. A green door listing  
on its hinges; behind it, a swamp of blackened  
bricks. Twisted metal bedframes. The air  
is salt and ashes. Where bitterness is swift  
to spread, we wash in frigid water. We huddle  
together, disconnected. Our batteries  
are dying, bright white circles fading to hazy  
amber halos. In electricity we trust. When it fails us,  
what else can we not depend on?

Our rosary of vehicles  
parked on the shoulder, we wade through empty hours  
to fill our tanks. At the church, we stand  
in yet another line for rationed supplies: a bucket  
and a flimsy sponge mop, one jar of peanut butter,  
two rolls of toilet paper, a fistful of matchbooks.  
The days mere stubs of wax, night is quick

to claim us. No stoplight punctuates the dark. We live on  
the far end of enough. Rescue floats  
beyond our fingers. Here in the bottomless  
shadow of death, how can we sleep? We have lost  
our eyes. We feel our way along the walls  
as if answers were written in braille.

God, if you are with us,  
are your arms too short to save? You have pulled down  
the curtain, snuffed out the sun—how can we see  
your silhouette? If it's true you can dry up the sea  
with a word, have you forgotten what you meant  
to say? How can you justify your silence,  
unless you are listening?

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**BIO:** *Emily Ruth Hazel is a poet, writer, and cross-pollinator who is passionate about making poetry approachable for a diverse community of readers and listeners by bringing everyday life into poetry and bringing poetry into everyday life. She engages not only literary enthusiasts but also those who rarely find themselves in poems.*

SILENCE

## Communion & Candle Lighting

### Song – Glorious Ruins//Man of Sorrows

JOEL HOUSTON AND MATT CROCKER

When the mountains fall  
And the tempest roars You are with me  
When creation folds  
Still my soul will soar on Your mercy



I'll walk through the fire  
With my head lifted high  
And my spirit revived in Your story  
And I'll look to the cross  
As my failure is lost  
In the light of Your glorious grace

**CHORUS**

*So Let the ruins come to life  
In the beauty of Your Name  
Rising up from the ashes  
God forever You reign  
And my soul will find refuge  
In the shadow of Your wings  
I will love You forever  
And forever I'll sing*

When the world caves in  
Still my hope will cling to Your promise  
Where my courage ends  
Let my heart find strength in Your presence

**BRIDGE**

Now my debt is paid, it is paid in full  
By the precious blood, that my Savior spilled  
Now the curse of sin has no hold on me  
Whom the Son sets free, Oh is free indeed!



## Scripture Reading—John 1:1-5

**NIV:** <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

**THE MESSAGE:** <sup>1</sup> The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. <sup>2</sup> The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one. Everything was created through him; nothing—not one thing!—came into being without him. What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out.

## Song – Nothing Without You

WILL REAGAN

Oh, God, peel back the layers of my heart  
I want communion, I want fellowship  
I wanna be with you where you are

### CHORUS

*I want to be with you  
I want to be with you  
I want to be with you, Lord*

I'm nothing without you  
I'm barely breathing  
Your heart is my refuge, oh, Lord

When I am tired and weak  
Lord, will you carry me?  
And when I'm feeling low  
Hold me close

When I am tired and weak  
Lord, will you carry me?  
When I am broken in two  
Pull me through

## **Song – Highlands (Song of Ascent)**

BEN HASTINGS AND JOEL HOUSTON

O how high would I climb mountains  
If the mountains were where You hide  
O how far I'd scale the valleys  
If You graced the other side

O how long have I chased rivers  
From lowly seas to where they rise  
Against the rush of grace descending  
From the source of its supply

In the highlands and the heartache  
You're neither more or less inclined  
I would search and stop at nothing  
You're just not that hard to find

## **CHORUS**

*So I will praise You on the mountain  
And I will praise You when the mountain's in my way  
You're the summit where my feet are  
So I will praise You in the valleys all the same  
No less God within the shadows  
No less faithful when the night leads me astray  
You're the heaven where my heart is  
In the highlands and the heartache all the same*

O how far beneath Your glory  
Does Your kindness extend the path  
From where Your feet rest on the sunrise  
To where You sweep the sinner's past

O how fast would You come running  
If just to shadow me through the night  
Trace my steps through all my failure  
And walk me out the other side

For who could dare ascend that mountain  
That valleyed hill called Calvary  
But for the One I call Good Shepherd  
Who like a lamb was slain for me

## **BRIDGE**

Whatever I walk through  
Wherever I am  
Your Name can move mountains  
Wherever I stand  
And if ever I walk through  
The valley of death  
I'll sing through the shadows  
My song of ascent

From the gravest of all valleys  
Come the pastures we call grace  
A mighty river flowing upwards  
From a deep but empty grave

## Benediction

BLESSING FOR THE LONGEST NIGHT

All throughout these months  
as the shadows  
have lengthened,  
this blessing has been  
gathering itself,  
making ready,  
preparing for  
this night.  
It has practiced  
walking in the dark,  
traveling with  
its eyes closed,  
feeling its way  
by memory  
by touch  
by the pull of the moon  
even as it wanes.  
So believe me  
when I tell you  
this blessing will  
reach you  
even if you  
have not light enough  
to read it;  
it will find you  
even though you cannot



see it coming.  
You will know  
the moment of its  
arriving  
by your release  
of the breath  
you have held  
so long;  
a loosening  
of the clenching  
in your hands,  
of the clutch  
around your heart;  
a thinning  
of the darkness  
that had drawn itself  
around you.  
This blessing  
does not mean  
to take the night away  
but it knows  
its hidden roads,  
knows the resting spots  
along the path,  
knows what it means  
to travel  
in the company  
of a friend.  
So when  
this blessing comes,  
take its hand.  
Get up.  
Set out on the road  
you cannot see.



This is the night  
when you can trust  
that any direction  
you go,  
you will be walking  
toward the dawn.

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**BIO:** *Jan is an artist, writer, and ordained minister in the United Methodist Church. She serves as director of The Wellspring Studio, LLC, and has traveled widely as a retreat leader and conference speaker. With work described by the Chicago Tribune as “breathtaking,” she has attracted an international audience drawn to the spaces of welcome, imagination, and solace that she creates in both word and image. Jan’s books include “The Cure for Sorrow”, “Night Visions”, “In the Sanctuary of Women”, and the recently released “Sparrow: A Book of Life and Death and Life.”*

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“This is the night when you can trust that  
any direction you go, you will be walking  
toward the dawn.”

– Jan Richardson

## **Final Word:**

If you are struggling through a difficult time in life, experiencing grief, divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, or any other life crisis and feel you would benefit by meeting one-to-one with a compassionate Stephen Minister to listen, care, encourage and provide emotional and spiritual support, please contact Pastor Don Riggs at:

[donr@churchbcc.org](mailto:donr@churchbcc.org).





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