

Great Thanksgiving

(Wind, Rain, Earthquake and Fire)

By the Rev. Michael C. Johnson

The Lord is always present.

Is the Lord the destructive wind?

No, the Lord is not the wind.

Is the Lord the destructive earthquake?

No, the Lord is not the earthquake.

Is the Lord the blazing fire?

No, the Lord is not the fire.

Where then is the Lord in the midst of my troubles?

Listen to the quiet at the center of the storm, listen for the voice of comfort.

I seek to quiet myself as a weaned child at their mother's breast.

Lover of my soul, You are always present, closer than I can even imagine.

When the flood waters come, You face them with us.

When the wind storms come, You face them with us and do not flee.

When the fires blaze over field and forest, You do not leave us.

When the lightening dances across the sky and thunder echoes through the night,

You are always there to hold us close.

From birth to death,

from before conception through to our life beyond life,

You are always there to bless us.

The harshest realities of life are not Your punishment,

You are slow to anger but abounding in steadfast love.

The painful realities of life are not due to Your neglect,

You bless us all, the just and the unjust; saint and sinner.

The seasons of this life are not a curse upon us, but reveal the many facets of Your glory.

We know that Your ways are not our ways, and Your thoughts are not our thoughts,

You understand our confusion.

You understand our disappointment, when what we have built crumbles to the ground.
You understand our anguish, at all we feel we have lost.
You understand life so much more than we do, for we see so little and our time is too short.

This is why Your soft voice says to us: "Do not be afraid."
This is why Your comforting voice says to us: "I will be with you to the very end."
This is why Your tender voice seeks to remind us: "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."
This is why in Your silence You choose to hold us close and never will let us go.

This is why we join in the song of survivors, those on earth and those in heaven proclaiming:

**Lord, to You I sing
For You are victorious
Danger washed away**

**Lord, You are my strength
My power and my salvation
My ancestral God.**

**I will now proclaim
You, Lord are my protector
The Love of my life. (*Exodus 15:1-3*)**

You have saved us and in Jesus, You have given us a Savior.
Jesus did not stop the violence, babies still died in Bethlehem.
Jesus did not stop hunger, people were not fed every day on loaves and fishes.
Jesus did not stop poverty
and was not the only one who had parents too poor to afford a lamb for sacrifice.
Jesus did not take all the diseases away
The man begging at the gate beautiful had to wait for Peter.
Jesus stopped the abuse of one woman caught in adultery, but not all abuse.

Jesus was Your presence.

Jesus showed us that Your will is love and compassion.

Jesus showed us that You never turn anyone away.

Jesus showed us what You can do through the life of one open to Your Spirit.

As we wash our hands, we remember,

that even though Jesus did not wash everyone's feet,

Jesus did step forward to wash the feet of those present at the Passover feast.

Jesus showed us that You did not look for those deserving the honor.

Jesus showed us that sin does not limit the demonstration of Your love.

Jesus showed us that You are not controlled by custom and tradition.

Jesus just washed the feet of all, and invited them to do the same

so Your love could reach more lives.

As we take this bread, we remember,

that even though Jesus was leading in the Passover ritual

Jesus was thankful that this bread could be through Your grace something more.

As Jesus broke and shared it, He said: "Take and eat, all of you, for this is my body given for you."

Jesus invites us to give our bodies in the same way as a witness of Your presence.

As we take this cup of juice, we remember,

that after supper Jesus took a cup of Passover wine,

with a prayer of thanks that this juice could be through Your grace something more.

Jesus passed His cup, and said, "Take a sip, each of you, for this is the cup of my blood,

poured out freely believing in God's promise of forgiveness, for you and for the world."

Jesus invites us to pour out our lives in the same way as a witness of Your presence.

We want to be a part of Your continuing work of salvation.

We want to be like Christ and live our lives through humble service to all.

We want to be like Christ and give our bodies sacrificially,

so that all may receive help in their time of need.

We want to be like Christ and pour out our blood, to stop the endless cycles of violence and fulfill

Your promise of forgiveness.

We want to be more like Christ and so we embrace this Holy Mystery revealed in His life as we proclaim:

Christ gave His life freely, and so shall I.

Christ received life graciously, and so shall I.

Christ will return to serve and so shall I.

Eye of the Hurricane, Un-consuming Flame
radically change this bread and this wine,
transform them for us into the body and blood of Christ
our constant help in time of need.

Eye of the Hurricane, Un-consuming Flame
radically change our live: our dreams, our plans and expectations
transform them for the world into Your church, the body and spouse of Christ
our constant help in time of need.

Eye of the Hurricane, Un-consuming flame
be present with all those who have been confronted
by wind and earthquake, flame and flood.
Let them hear Your comforting voice.
Use us to extend Your healing touch.
Use us to expend Your miracles of grace and blessing.

We add our voice to the calming voice of Christ: "Peace be still."

We add our voice to the Spirit hovering over our chaos, bringing forth the fruit of peace.

We add our voice to the creative and re-creative voice of God who alone makes a way when there is no way. So that our faith might encourage and our God might receive our glory, honor and praise, even now and in the days to come.

Amen.

