

This downloadable resource from Concordia Publishing House includes fully customizable resources for the pastor and musician, designed to lead the Christian congregation through the season of Lent in preparation for the Easter celebration. Concordia Publishing House also offers coordinated Daily Devotion booklets and standard size bulletin covers that may be used to enrich the worship of those congregations using this series. More information about coordinated products may be found at cph.org/lent. This preview document contains excerpted portions of the major components for Midweek of Lent 1.

THE HAND OF THE LORD

Resources for Lent and Easter Preaching and Worship

Sermon series by Matthew D. Rosebrock

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SERIES INTRODUCTION

[Series Introduction also available in Additional Resources for possible use in congregational newsletter.]

THE HAND OF THE LORD

Whether tightening a bolt, crocheting, or typing on a computer, there is so much that we do with our hands. The Greek physician Galen called them *the instrument of instruments*. Indeed, hands are instruments that can do a great deal of things. Hands can be used to heal or hurt, work or wreck, build or break, seize or surrender, and on and on. Hands are so often central to the ways we interact with the world that they have also become figurative symbols of power, control, craftsmanship, and possession. We daily speak of hands in many phrases, such as “Lend a hand,” “Things are out of hand,” “Working together hand in glove,” and “Close at hand.” Moreover, in our modern era of robotic, machine, and computer processing, adding “hand” as a prefix to many words can often communicate something that is personal and intentional. Labeling something as handpicked, handwritten, or handmade adds a personal touch and significance. Our Creator has bestowed on us these amazing instruments.

It is no surprise that mentions of hands appear all over the Bible as God's Word speaks to us in ways that we can understand. All things are the work of the hand of the Lord (Psalm 102:25). The Lord's hand is referred to over two hundred times in the Old Testament. The Lord's hand is active in creation, power, control over happenings of the world, judgment, and salvation. The hand of the Lord was upon Ezekiel when He gave him a vision (Ezekiel 3:22), and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines in the days of Samuel (1 Samuel 7:13). The hand of the Lord is both Law and Gospel.

Perhaps surprisingly, specific references to the "hand of the Lord" are not all that frequent in the New Testament. However, it is precisely in the New Testament where the hand of the Lord takes on literal meaning. The One through whom all things were created took on real, literal hands in His incarnation (John 1:1–14). We have several examples throughout Scripture that speak of the way that Christ used His hands alongside His life-giving words to bring forgiveness, life, and salvation. The work of Christ's hands helps us to see the merciful and personal way that He has condescended to us. He has given us something to grasp, even as He holds us. Jesus used His hands to save drowning Peter, to feed the multitudes, to touch those who were unclean, to stop a funeral procession in its tracks, to lift up Jairus's daughter, and to bless the children. The hand of the Lord has come to us in Jesus.

On the other hand, the literal and figurative actions of mere human hands in the Bible are often the means of our own sin. After all, our own Lord was "delivered into the hands of men" (Luke 9:44). However, on a greater level, we know that it was the hand of the Lord at work all along, most especially in His crucifixion. Christ laid down His life of His own authority as He allowed Himself to be delivered into the hands of sinful men (John 10:18). His hands were pierced for the sins of the world. His hands rested on Holy Saturday. Yet, on the third day, He rose again. He now holds us in His hands, and no one can snatch us from His hand (John 10:28). Our Lord has hands, real hands. Jesus has accomplished all that we need. Amazingly, He takes our manipulative, distorted, self-serving hands and restores them into useful hands for His purposes, both to literally use them in service and to make our whole lives into His instruments of witness, service, and praise.

FEATURES OF THE SERIES

The Hand of the Lord: Resources for Lent–Easter Preaching and Worship, and Children’s Service from Concordia Publishing House includes fully customizable resources for the pastor and musician. It is designed to lead the Christian congregation through the season of Lent in preparation for the Easter celebration. It consists of the following components:

PREACHING AND TEACHING RESOURCES

ASH WEDNESDAY

Sermon: The Hand of the Lord Who Freely Gives

Children’s Message: Left Hand and Right Hand

Bible Study: The Hand of the Lord Who Freely Gives

MIDWEEK OF LENT 1

Sermon: The Hand of the Lord Who Creates and Saves

Children’s Message: The Saving Hand of the Lord

Bible Study: The Hand of the Lord Who Creates and Saves

MIDWEEK OF LENT 2

Sermon: The Hand of the Lord Who Casts Out Demons

Children’s Message: The Finger of God

Bible Study: The Hand of the Lord Who Casts Out Demons

MIDWEEK OF LENT 3

Sermon: The Hand of the Lord Who Heals the Sick

Children’s Message: Jesus’ Hand Brings Cleansing

Bible Study: The Hand of the Lord Who Heals the Sick

MIDWEEK OF LENT 4

Sermon: The Hand of the Lord Who Raises the Dead

Children’s Message: The Hand of the Lord Who Raises the Dead

Bible Study: The Hand of the Lord Who Raises the Dead

MIDWEEK OF LENT 5

Sermon: The Hand of the Lord Who Holds All Things

Children’s Message: All Things Are in His Hands

Bible Study: The Hand of the Lord Who Holds All Things

HOLY (MAUNDY) THURSDAY

Sermon: The Hand of the Lord Who Serves and Feeds Us

GOOD FRIDAY

Sermon: The Hand of the Lord Who Was Pierced for Us

EASTER VIGIL

Sermon: The Hand of the Lord Who Made Us

EASTER

Sermon: The Hand of the Lord Who Is Risen

Children's Message: The Hand of the Risen Lord

Bible Study: The Hand of the Lord Who Is Risen

WORSHIP AND MUSIC RESOURCES

The Hand of the Lord: Resources for Lent and Easter Preaching and Worship follows no particular lectionary; instead, readings have been appointed that support the thematic emphasis on the Lenten journey.

Worship services for Ash Wednesday, five midweek services, Holy (Maundy) Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter are provided in both creative and traditional formats. Traditional services use service settings as found in *Lutheran Service Book*, while the creative services provide more liturgical variety. Those planning the worship services may choose between the resources offered in both services to fit local customs and needs.

A new series hymn titled “The Word That Spoke in Darkness” has been provided. The text is written by hymnwriter Lisa M. Clark and is intended to coordinate with this series. The text is written for use with the tune KING’S LYNN (found at *LSB* 517–18) or with a new tune written by composer Mark Knickelbein. A new choral arrangement has also been prepared with that new tune, which could be used to introduce the hymn to the congregation. This arrangement is voiced for two-part mixed choir with optional congregation participation, accompanied on piano.

The worship services are also available to use through Lutheran Service Builder. The links for the services may be found on the “Digital Content” page.

PREVIEW OF MIDWEEK OF LENT 1: CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

FOCUS: MATTHEW 14:22–33

VISUAL: THE MAIN ILLUSTRATION FOR THIS SERMON IS A STRONG HANDSHAKE.¹

SUMMARY: JESUS' STRONG HAND TO SAVE US LIFTS US UP.

MESSAGE

Who here wants to shake my hand?

Ask one or a few children to shake your hand. If needed, encourage them to give you a strong handshake.

Wow, that is a strong handshake. You know, sometimes after church, some people come up and give me really strong handshakes. [You might even want to give an example from your congregation, if appropriate.] I always have to make sure that I am ready. It can be a good thing to give a firm handshake—but not too much!—because it shows people that you are present and paying attention to them.

Jesus has a strong hand in our reading for today! Jesus went away to pray while His disciples got into a boat on the Sea of Galilee. The wind and waves crashed against them. Jesus decided to go out to them. How did Jesus make it to the boat?

Allow the children to answer.

That's right! He walked on the water! The disciples knew that people do not normally do that. They thought that He was a ghost! Peter doubted that it was Jesus, so he asked Jesus to let Peter come out to Him! An amazing thing happened. Jesus said, "Come" (v. 29), and Peter was walking on the water! But Peter stopped looking at Jesus and started looking at all the wind and waves, and he started to be afraid. He started to sink! But what did Jesus do with His hand?

Allow the children to answer ... [Full children's message available with purchase].

¹ Listen to Rev. Dr. Peter Nafzger briefly mention this analogy of a handshake while discussing this text (Jessica Bordeleau, Peter Nafzger, and David Schmitt, hosts, "11th Sunday after Pentecost," *Lectionary Kick-Start*, August 7, 2023, <https://sites.libsyn.com/473766/lectionarykickstart/11th-sunday-after-pentecost> [accessed April 16, 2024]).

PREVIEW OF MIDWEEK OF LENT 1: SERMON AND NOTES

INTRODUCTION TO SERIES SERMON

MIDWEEK OF LENT 1: THE HAND OF THE LORD WHO CREATES AND SAVES

When Peter walked out onto the water, he began to sink as he took his eyes off Jesus. But the Lord was quick to reach His hand down to save him. When Christ walked on the water, He demonstrated that He is God in the flesh, through whom all things were created. It is all the work of His hands. In saving Peter, He also showed that He is compassionate. In our helpless state, Christ has reached down to pull us from the pit of despair.

OVERVIEW

Text: Matthew 14:22–33

Sermon Theme: Jesus, the Creator of all, stretches out His compassionate hand to save us.

Sermon Goal: That the hearers may trust in Christ’s compassionate hand to save them in times of despair and helplessness.

Series Lectionary:

Old Testament: Job 9:1–12

Psalm: Psalm 8 (alt. Psalm 69:1–3)

Epistle: Ephesians 2:1–10

Gospel: Matthew 14:22–33

SERMON NOTES

This text immediately follows the feeding of the five thousand. The beginning of that passage describes the intent of Jesus to withdraw to be by Himself. However, the crowds continue to press in on Him when they learn of where He has gone. The disciples wanted to handle the situation by dismissing the crowds. Rather than turn them away, Jesus shows compassion upon the crowds by taking into His hands and blessing the bread and the fish, breaking the loaves, and then feeding the crowds, even using the disciples’ hands to distribute the baskets of bread and fish. Jesus has shown the people that He is God come to shepherd and feed His people. Furthermore, He is in control of the entire situation.

SERMON OUTLINE

Jesus' hands are the hands of the Lord
Jesus treads upon the waves
Jesus is God in the flesh
His hand can seem mysterious and at times terrifying
Peter tries to take things into his own hands
We do the same
The Hand of the Lord is quick to save Peter
The same Hand of the Lord has reached down to save us

SERMON

In our Lenten and Easter series, we will be focusing on the hand of the Lord. Specifically, we will be focusing on the hand of our Lord Jesus, God in the flesh, the Creator. In our Gospel for this evening, Jesus' hand reaches down save Peter. The Hand of the Lord saves.

Up to this point in Matthew's Gospel account, Jesus' hand has been at work. Immediately before our Reading, Jesus took five loaves and two fish into His hands and fed five thousand men, besides women and children. Jesus was in control of that situation, and He had a handle on this situation with Peter even before Peter needed Jesus to grab him out the water. It was Jesus who immediately made the disciples get into the boat. When they were struggling against the wind and the waves, it was Jesus who came to His disciples, walking on the waves.

All of this thus far has been pointing to who Jesus is. He is God, the Creator in the flesh. Job said that it is God "who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea" (9:8). Jesus is the Great I AM. He is the Word through whom "all things were made" (John 1:3). He is God walking on the sea. When His hand stretches out, it is truly the hand of the Lord. That also means that what Jesus does with those hands also is the work of God. His hand is in control. But sometimes, our limited understanding has difficulty grasping when God seems distant, mysterious, and even terrifying.

While the disciples were out in the boat, they had one of those moments. They were frightened early in the morning. But our text does not say that the wind and waves were scaring them. They had, no doubt, handled their fair share of wind and waves out on the Sea of Galilee. What terrified them? It was this figure walking on the water! They cried out, "It is a ghost!" Now that would strike fear into the heart of a fisherman.

But the Lord addressed each of their concerns. To their being troubled, He said, "Take heart." To their cry that it was a ghost, He said, "It is I." To their being afraid, He said, "Do not be afraid."

The Lord *immediately* addressed all of their concerns right there! They had everything that they needed in His words. Everything was in His hands...[Full sermon available with purchase].

PREVIEW OF MIDWEEK OF LENT 1: BIBLE STUDY
MIDWEEK OF LENT 1: LEADER'S GUIDE
THE HAND OF THE LORD WHO CREATES AND SAVES

Matthew 14:22–33

OPENING

Dear heavenly Father, You are our Creator. We stand in awe of the work of Your hands. Not only are You awesome in Your deeds, but You are also compassionate to save. Bless our time of study so that we may see ever more clearly how You save us through Your Son and our Lord, Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

This week, we will be turning our focus to texts that show the specific ways that the hand of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, works for us. We have one of the well-known and well-loved texts: Jesus walking on water. This text makes a clear proclamation of Jesus' divine nature as the one who treads upon the waves. Matthew 14 is the only text that includes the account of Jesus' interaction with Peter. As we will see, we get a direct reference to the hand of the Lord that reaches down and saves Peter from sinking, for our Lord is compassionate and merciful.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTIONS ONLY ARE FOUND IN THE STUDENT GUIDE

Q1. Read Matthew 14:22–27. Who has this entire situation in His hand?

A1. Jesus has His hand on this entire situation. He is the one who commanded the disciples to get into the boat at the beginning of these events.

Q2. What does the text say was the reason that the disciples were afraid? How does Jesus address their concerns?

A2. The text does not indicate that the disciples, some of whom were experienced fishermen, were afraid of the wind and waves. Rather, they were afraid of what they perceived to be a ghost walking on the water.² Jesus *immediately* addressed all of their concerns with His words. He was calling them to simply trust in His words.

Q3. Read Job 9:8 and Exodus 3:14. While Jesus' response of "It is I" (Matthew 14:27) can simply be a form of greeting, it can also be literally translated as "I am." How do these texts help us to understand what this moment is saying about Jesus?

A3. Job proclaimed that it is God "who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea" (Job 9:8). Jesus has control even over the chaos of the sea. The fear of the disciples does not come from the wind and waves but rather from seeing Jesus walking on the water toward them. While Jesus' response of *ego eimi* (literally, "I am") can simply mean, "It is I," as translated in the ESV, this does not necessarily preclude the double meaning, given this context, of it referring also to the divine name revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. The broader theological point is in keeping with John's Gospel account, as Jesus is the Word through whom "all things were made" (John 1:3). Furthermore, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Because the one Christ Jesus is both true God and true man, it is right to say that the hand of Jesus is the hand of God—in other words, the Hand of the Lord.

MIDWEEK OF LENT 1: CREATIVE SERVICE

THE HAND OF THE LORD WHO CREATES AND SAVES

AS WE GATHER

The God who is Creator of all came to save us from sin and death in the incarnate Son of Mary, Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God. He is God. He first revealed Himself to Moses with the holy name "I AM," saying, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:14). When Jesus came to His disciples walking on the crashing waves of the sea of Galilee, He said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27). "It is I" is the same term for the divine

² See Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 760.

The waters closed in over me to | take my life;*
the deep sur- | rounded me;
weeds were wrapped a- | bout my head*
at the roots of the | mountains.
I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me for- | ever;*
yet You brought up my life from the pit, O | LORD my God.
When my life was fainting away, I remem- | bered the LORD,*
and my prayer came to You, into Your holy | temple.
Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of | steadfast love.*
But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacri- | fice to You;
what I have vowed | I will pay.*
Salvation belongs | to the LORD!

I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and He | answered me;*
out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You | heard my voice.

READING

Job 9:1–12

P ¹Then Job answered and said:

²“Truly I know that it is so:

But how can a man be in the right before God?

³If one wished to contend with Him,

one could not answer Him once in a thousand times.

⁴He is wise in heart and mighty in strength

—who has hardened himself against Him, and succeeded?—

⁵He who removes mountains, and they know it not,

when He overturns them in His anger,

⁶who shakes the earth out of its place,

and its pillars tremble;

⁷who commands the sun, and it does not rise;

who seals up the stars;

⁸who alone stretched out the heavens

and trampled the waves of the sea;

⁹who made the Bear and Orion,

the Pleiades and the chambers of the south;

¹⁰who does great things beyond searching out,

and marvelous things beyond number.

¹¹Behold, He passes by me, and I see Him not;

He moves on, but I do not perceive Him.

¹²Behold, He snatches away; who can turn Him back?

Who will say to Him, ‘What are You doing?’

P This is the Word of the Lord

C **Thanks be to God.**

...[Full Customizable Creative Worship Service available with purchase].

the moon and the stars, which You have | set in place,
what is man that You are mind- | ful of him,*
and the son of man that You | care for him?
Yet You have made him a little lower than the heavenly | beings*
and crowned him with glory and | honor.
You have given him dominion over the works | of Your hands;*
You have put all things under | his feet,
all sheep and | oxen,*
and also the beasts | of the field,
the birds of the heavens, and the fish | of the sea,*
whatever passes along the paths | of the seas.
O | LORD our Lord,*
how majestic is Your name in | all the earth!

SERIES HYMN

“The Word That Spoke in Darkness” (*See insert*)

[OR]

HYMN

“In Silent Pain the Eternal Son” (*LSB 432*)

+ READINGS +

READING

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READING

Matthew 14:22–33

P ²²Immediately [Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. ²³And after He had dismissed the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone, ²⁴but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. ²⁵And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶But when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

²⁸And Peter answered Him, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” ²⁹He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” ³¹Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” ³²And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.”

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

...[Full Customizable Traditional Worship Service available with purchase].