



Lakeside Sermons

Lakeside Baptist Church • Rocky Mount, North Carolina
Elizabeth J. Edwards, Associate Minister

March 28, 2024
Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday Reflection Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14; John 13:1-17, 34-35

From the time the young Paul Gerhardt graduated from the University of Wittenberg, he was recognized for his gifts for hymn writing. He completed his studies in 1642 as the final gasps of the Thirty Years War raged across Central Europe, causing a delay in his first pastoral appointment. His work as a tutor and later as a Lutheran minister in and around Berlin put him in contact with many of the leading cantors and organists in Germany, including Johann Crüger, who was the editor of the one the most widely used hymnals of his day. These connections allowed Gerhardt's hymns to gain wide exposure and eventually earn him a reputation as Germany's greatest hymn writer. His work told of a faith that overflowed with trust and praise, expressed in simple, pure language.

Despite the tragedies of losing four of his five children in infancy and his wife at a relatively young age after a lengthy illness, Gerhardt continued to express his faith in verse and to devote much of his ministry to working to mediate the significant tensions between Lutheran and Calvinist factions of the German church. Over his lifetime, he is credited with publishing over 130 hymns, several of which were translated into English by John Wesley and Catherine Winkworth. Perhaps most notably, Johann Sebastian Bach used several single stanzas of Gerhardt's hymns in his church cantatas, motets, Passions and his *Christmas Oratorio*.

Among Gerhardt's several Passion hymns, "A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth," beautifully captures the confidence and joy we have through Christ, pointing us toward the saving work Christ accomplished on the cross, and reminding us that one day we will stand in joy beside him because he has not only suffered and died but rose again and is now glorified in the fulfillment of God's kingdom. Tonight, the Lakeside Chancel Choir presents David von Kampen's 2016 setting of Gerhardt's hymn, "A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth."

Invocation: Holy God, whose wisdom is unsearchable, whose mercy is unfailing, we gather on this night as brothers and sisters around the table which reminds us of the night when our Lord was betrayed. We gather on this night to remember your commandment that we love one another as you have so fully loved us. May our remembrances lead us to a deeper recognition of your grace, and your grace cleanse and empower us to offer your gifts of mercy, peace and hope to a world longing for good news and yearning for new life. Even in this hour of darkness, we gather to praise you, O God, for you are our light and our salvation. We gather and we pray in the name of the One who has given himself for us, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.