

Celebrating the Life of Jessica Stevenson



August 23, 2026

Opening Hymn: Give Thanks for Life

Wonder, Love and Praise #775

1. Give thanks for life, the meas - ure of our days,
 2. Give thanks for those who made their life a light
 3. And for our own, our liv - ing and our dead,
 4. Give thanks for hope, that like the wheat, the grain

mor - tal, we pass through beau - ty that de - cays, yet
 caught from the Christ flame burst - ing through the night, who
 thanks for the love by which our life is fed, a
 ly - ing in dark - ness does its life re - tain, in

sing to God our hope, our love, our praise,
 touched the truth, who burned for what is right,
 love not changed by time or death or dread, } Al -
 res - ur - rec - tion to grow green a - gain.

le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia!

Opening Prayers

Presider

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. -*Matthew 5:4*

We have come here today to remember before God our sister Jessica, to give thanks for her life, to commend her to God, and to comfort one another in our grief.

Presider

God be with you.

People

And also with you.

Presider

Let us pray.

O God of grace and glory, we remember before you this day our sister Jessica. We thank you for giving her to us, her family and friends, to know and to love as a companion on our earthly pilgrimage. In your boundless compassion, console us who mourn. Give us faith to see in death the gate of eternal life, so that in quiet confidence we may continue our course on earth, until, by your call, we are reunited with those who have gone before; through Jesus Christ our Savior. ***Amen.***

Reading

Lector A reading from *Take This Bread* by Sara Miles.

And then — here's where the story got irrational. I didn't exactly "believe" it, the way I believed in the boiling point of water, or photosynthesis, but it seemed true to me — wholly true, in ways that mere facts could never be. I believed this God rose from the dead to have breakfast with his friends.

I read about the crazy days after Jesus' arrest, death and burial, when the terrified disciples were scattering, just as I'd seen peasants and revolutionaries run from the violence of soldiers in Latin America. A stranger hailed them on the road to Emmaus. They told him what had happened, and he explained it all by citing Scripture, recounting old prophecies in impressive detail. Then, according to the book, they came to a village and invited the stranger to eat with them, as the night was drawing near. He sat down at the table, took bread, and broke it. Suddenly "their eyes were opened," reported the book. "He made himself known in the breaking of bread, and they felt their hearts on fire." Then he vanished. In another story, he reappeared cooking food on the beach. In another, he showed up to tell his followers that he was hungry and wanted something to eat. They gave him a piece of fish.

All of it pointed to a force stronger than the anxious formulas of religion: a radically inclusive love that accompanied people in the most ordinary of actions — eating, drinking, walking — and stayed with them, through fear, even past death. That love meant giving yourself away, embracing outsiders as family, emptying yourself to feed and live for others. The stories illuminated the holiness located in mortal human bodies, and the promise that people could see God by cherishing all those different bodies the way God did. They spoke of a communion so much vaster than any church could contain: one I had sensed all my life could be expressed in the sharing of food, particularly with strangers.

I couldn't stop thinking about another story: Jesus instructing his beloved, fallible disciple Peter exactly how to love him: "Feed my sheep."

Jesus asked, "Do you love me?" Peter fussed: "Of course I love you."

"Feed my sheep."

Peter fussed some more.

"Do you love me?" asked Jesus again. "Then feed my sheep."

It seemed pretty clear. If I wanted to see God, I could feed people.

Lector Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
All ***Thanks be to God.***

Psalm 23 – Bobby McFerrin Rendition

The Lord is my shepherd, I have all I need. She makes me to lie down in green meadows,

beside the still wa - ters she will lead. She restores my soul, she rights my wrongs,

she leads me in a path of good things, and fills my heart with songs.

Even though I walk through a dark and drear - y land, there is nothing that can shake me,

she has said she won't for - sake me, I'm in her hand.

She sets a table before me in the pres - ence of my foes,

she anoints my head with oil, and my cup o - ver flows. Surely,

surely goodness and kindness will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will live in her house forever, for - ev - er and ev - er.
Glory to our Mother, and Daughter, and to the Ho - ly of Ho - lies,
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world with - out end. A - men.

Copyright © Bobby McFerrin

The Gospel

Deacon The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew (25:31-40).
People ***Glory to you, O Christ.***

‘When the Son of Humanity comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Deacon The Gospel of our Savior.
People ***Praise to you, O Christ.***

Hymn: Precious Lord, Take My Hand

New Century Hymnal, #472

1 Pre-cious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand,
 2 When my way grows drear, pre-cious Lord, lin-ger near,
 3 When the shad-ows ap-pear and the night draws near,

I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
 when my life is al-most gone,
 and the day is past and gone,

Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light:
 Hear me cry, hear my call, hold my hand, lest I fall:
 At the riv-er I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand:

Refrain

Take my hand, pre-cious Lord, lead me home.

Thomas A. Dorsey was known as "Georgia Tom" when he played piano for blues singer Ma Rainey. He started writing gospel songs after what he called "a definite spiritual change." This inspirational song, composed following the deaths of his wife, Nettie, and a newborn child, derives from the tune Maitland.

Tune: PRECIOUS LORD Irr. with refrain
 Thomas A. Dorsey, 1932

Community Remembrances

The Prayers of the People

Deacon

In peace, let us pray to God.

God, your will for us is life abundant; receive Jessica into the fullness of life in your presence.

O God, hear our prayer.

You know the thoughts of our hearts and our journeys of faith; shed the brightness of your light on Jessica, who faithfully sought and followed you.

O God, hear our prayer.

You are greater than all our ideas and images of you; draw Jessica into the Mystery of your being.

O God, hear our prayer.

We know you as perfect Mercy and Love; welcome Jessica in the grace of that love and mercy.

O God, hear our prayer.

We praise you as our source of consolation, peace, and hope; grant to all of us who mourn your deep peace, surround us with your steadfast love, and renew our hearts.

O God, hear our prayer.

Our wider Church family commends all who die to the care of Christ, the love of God our Source, and the communion of the Holy Spirit; and so we commend Jessica to you, giving thanks for the gift of her life.

O God, hear our prayer.

May the Holy One, to whom all the desires of our hearts are known before we ask, hear our prayers for Jessica and for all who mourn, and grant us newness of life, and peace. ***Amen.***

Presider

Welcoming God: you call us to love and serve all people and to honor the image of you, our Creator, in them: we gather to give thanks for Jessica, whose death we grieve, whose life we celebrate, whose memories are woven into our hearts. Holding the future in hope, and the past in compassion and gratitude, we join our prayers with those of God's people of every time and every place, through Jesus Christ and your Holy Spirit. ***Amen.***

The Blessing

The Blessing of Saint Clare

Presider

Live without fear: your Creator has made you holy, always walks with you, and loves you as a Mother. Go in peace to follow the good road, and may God's blessing be upon you now and for ever. ***Amen.***

Closing Hymn: Oh When the Saints Go Marching In

All Creation Sings #950

1 Oh, when the saints go march - ing in, oh, when the
 2 Oh, when the Lord in glo - ry comes, oh, when the
 3 Oh, when the new world is re - vealed, oh, when the
 4 Oh, when they gath - er round the throne, oh, when they
 5 And on that hal - le - lu - jah day, and on that

saints go march - ing in, O Lord, I want to be in that
 Lord in glo - ry comes, O Lord, I want to be in that
 new world is re - vealed, O Lord, I want to be in that
 gath - er round the throne, O Lord, I want to be in that
 hal - le - lu - jah day, O Lord, I want to be in that

num - ber when the saints go march - ing in.
 num - ber when the Lord in glo - ry comes.
 num - ber when the new world is re - vealed.
 num - ber when they gath - er round the throne.
 num - ber on that hal - le - lu - jah day.

Text: African American spiritual
 Music: African American spiritual; arr. hymnal version
 Arr. © 2020 Augsburg Fortress

WHEN THE SAINTS
 8 8 10 7

The Dismissal

Deacon
People

Go in peace to love and serve God. Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Refreshments will follow this service – please join us!

Serving

The Rev'd Cameron Partridge, Presider
Rector, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, San Francisco

The Rev'd Margaret Dyer-Chamberlain, Deacon
Deacon, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, San Francisco

The Rev'd Eric Nefstead, Guest Musician

Barbara Stevenson, Reader

Sources

Worship text is adapted from *Enriching Our Worship 3* (New York: Church Publishing, 2007), 27-28 and the *Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Publishing, 1979), 491-505.

The prayer at the conclusion of the Prayers of the People is from *Enriching Our Worship III* (New York: Church Publishing, 2007), 77.

The Blessing of St. Clare is slightly adapted from *Enriching Our Worship I* (New York: Church Publishing, 1998), 71

