



Service of the Word

December 13, 2020

Advent 3

"I Believe in God: Ode to Joy"

In Home Worship with First Lutheran Church

Online resources can be found on our website

<https://www.firstlutheransandpoint.org/online-worship.html>.

Prelude (*Play music that prepares your heart, mind, soul, and body for worship. Create a place to begin building your Advent wreath with a candle and means for lighting (battery powered or flame) it ready. Other symbols of Advent: evergreens, the color blue and purple, and a creche / Nativity Set, if you have one.*)

“Raise your voice... do not be afraid.” — The Messenger

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Welcome

Crossing the Threshold

This week, we turn to Luke’s writing, which is an account in two acts: the Gospel biography of Jesus and then the story of the early church—the “Jesus community.” Whether you were a Jew or Gentile in those days, deciding to become a part of this illegal early Christian movement could bring punishment for your allegiance. Surely the message in both Luke and Isaiah that the downcast, lowly, and oppressed would rise up is a welcome and inspirational account. Like the Jewish exiled people of Isaiah’s time and like the early Christians, we also sometimes wonder where God is in our suffering. We long to hear the promise that a reason for joyful praise is the good news on the way!

[This poem was written on a wall in a Concentration Camp during World War II. Composer Mark A. Miller put these words to music and will be the central focus of our Advent preparations this season.]

I believe in God, I believe in God,
even when, even when God is silent.

Reader: The loneliness of fear

Congregation: The loneliness of fear

Reader: The invisibility of the next step

Congregation: The invisibility of the next step

Reader: The yearning for presence

Congregation: The yearning for presence

Prayer of the Day

Holy One,
we thank you for the glimpses we catch
of your gift of the depths of joy.
Even in the midst of fear, of challenge, of struggle—
even when we are not sure of your presence
ignite the flame of joy within us,
**People: ... that we might glow with its brilliance
from the inside out.**

[Congregation joins choir recording in unison]

**I believe in God, I believe in God,
even when, even when God is silent.**

Pastor: Help us face the silence of unknowing
and embrace it as the pregnant pause before joyful new beginnings. **Amen.**

[for online worship]

Pastor: You are invited to light your Advent 3 candle of Love at this time.

GATHERING SONG: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (ELW 257, st. 7)

7 O come, O King of nations, come,
O Cornerstone that binds in one:
refresh the hearts that long for you;
restore the broken, make us new.

Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 57: 14-19 (CEB)

It will be said: “Survey, survey; build a road!
Remove barriers from my people’s road!”
The one who is high and lifted up,
who lives forever, whose name is holy, says:

I live on high, in holiness,
and also with the crushed and the lowly,
reviving the spirit of the lowly,
reviving the heart of those who have been crushed.

I won't always accuse,
nor will I be enraged forever.
It is my own doing that their spirit is exhausted—
I gave them breath!
I was enraged about their illegal profits;
I struck them; in rage I withdrew from them.
Yet they went on wandering wherever they wanted.
I have seen their ways, but I will heal them.
I will guide them,
and reward them with comfort.

And for those who mourn,
I will create reason for praise:
utter prosperity to those far and near,
and I will heal them, says the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Children's Time to Shine

"This Little Light of Mine" - Video

[One verse of sign language for this song is learned each Sunday.]

'This Little Light of Mine' is a song that turns 100 years old this year! A woman named Fannie Lou Hamer sang it on a bus one day that had been stopped by police and it became a very important song that was sung a lot during the Civil Rights movement when some people wanted to dim the light of African Americans by not letting them vote in elections. So as we all learn more about the importance of music in making the world a better place, we are going to highlight this song! There are four verses and we are going to learn one each week." Learning it in sign language includes the one million people who primarily communicate in this language.

[We learn how to sign verse 3 today]

Hide it under a bushel, No!
I'm going to let it shine!
Hide it under a bushel, No!
I'm going to let it shine!
Let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine!

Thank you, everyone, for "singing by signing!" I feel more JOY already! When we add more music and more light to the world, we increase the Joy in the world. Sometimes we get tired or sad. When this happens, music can uplift us. It can spark a light in our eyes once again!

Thank you! Let's pray a repeat-after-me prayer.

Thank you, God...

for giving us light... and for giving us music... Help our hands dance... and our hearts sing... to spread more [hope] ... in the world... Amen...

GOSPEL: Luke 1:1-4, 26-56

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the

angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON -

SONG OF THE DAY: *People, Look East* (ELW 248)

1 People, look east. The time is near
of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east, and sing today--
Love, the Guest, is on the way.

4 Angels announce with shouts of mirth
him who brings new life to earth.
Set ev'ry peak and valley humming
with the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east, and sing today--
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim,
one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining beyond the frosty weather,
bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east, and sing today--
Love, the Star, is on the way.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of power and might, comfort your people and come quickly to this weary world.
Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

God of preachers and messengers, you have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming good news. Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people who contribute their prayers and talents to public worship (*the congregation's worship leaders may be named*). Embed your word in their hearts. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of every living creature, you announce the year of your favor for all of creation. Extend your kindness and relief to endangered animals and plants. Strengthen the human beings who rely on the rhythms of nature to make their living. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of all peoples and nations, you plant us as your oaks of righteousness and ask us to care for one another. Be present with the leaders of every nation as they govern. Give them a spirit of righteousness, that your goodness and mercy is revealed through their actions. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of exiles and wanderers, you repair what was once destroyed. We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm (*survivors of recent natural disasters may be named*). Support the work of Lutheran World Relief,

Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts.
Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of the powerful and helpless, you clothe us with strength when our spirits are weak and weary. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. Make your church a place of refuge and healing.
Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of sinners and saints, you offer joy even in the midst of our grief. We are grateful for the beloved, imperfect people whose lives testified to your radiant love (*especially Lucy, martyr of the church*). Anoint all who mourn with the oil of gladness. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words, now and in creative ways throughout the week.

Offering Announcement and Opportunities to "Fill the Night" with Hope *(See the Advent 2020 Invite)*

OFFERING

If you would like to offer financial support for the ministries of First Lutheran, you can mail them to the church. 526 S. Olive, Ave. Sandpoint, ID 83864

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

Carol of Resistance - *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee (Beethoven's Ninth Symphony)*

Introduction to the Carol:

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, which is the basis of the tune for our hymn "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee," has been a powerful witness to the human spirit to overcome adversity in many instances around the globe. British punk rock star, Billy Bragg, once wrote an alternative translation of the original German choral score for a school teacher to teach the children in her classroom, and it soon became a popular anthem, even being performed for the Queen. In these words you can hear the call to resist division, to raise our voices, to "furnish every heart with joy and banish all hatred for good."

[the hymn begins]

"See now like a Phoenix rising
from the rubble of the war
hope of ages manifested
peace and freedom evermore.
Brothers, sisters stand together,
raise your voices now as one.
Though by history divided,
reconciled in unison.

What's to be then all my brothers,
sisters; what is in your hearts?
Tell me now the hopes you harbour,
What's the task and where to start.
... Those speak ten million voices;
every word is understood.
Furnish every heart with joy
and banish all hatred for good."

Throw off now the chains of ancient
bitterness and enmity.
And in hand let's walk together
on the path of liberty.
Hark...a new dawn is breaking;
raise your voices now as one.
Though by history divided,
reconciled in unison.

Benediction

Pastor: You are invited to pick up this week's candle and
Hold it high for the Benediction:

We wait for justice
but we do not wait to work for change;

We wait for restored health
but we do not wait to work to heal;

We wait for wholeness
but we do not wait to work at binding brokenness;

We wait for peace
but we do not wait to work to eliminate hatred.

And so, my friends, like bells ringing out the news
that God is ever-present with us,
Continue to fill the night left by sadness with messages of joy.
Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep that joy alive in you
and that spur you on in your work of justice and reconciliation.

Raise your voices and repeat after me...

“do not be afraid!”

“do not be afraid!”

Amen!

DISMISSAL

This is the mission we share in Christ's name:
To Praise God! Nurture Faith! And Serve All!
Go in Peace. Prepare the Way of the Lord!
Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

WORSHIP NOTES:

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PRAYERS: Please hold the following people in prayer for healing and new life:

Luther Park - Its staff, residents, families, and our management Company, Ecumen as they seek to care for one another and stay apart, waiting with patience for the pandemic to wane. Thankful for the recovery of residents and staff, who contracted Covid-19. As of Dec. 9th, two residents and 1 staff member continue with active cases of the illness.

Our Country - In the midst of division and ongoing uncertainty about our future.

Our People and those connected to us: Pastor Steve Neuder and family, Chris Ingham; Michael Cressina; Randy Petersen; Nicky Schripsema; Wendi Lies; Gerda Burke; Debbie Haberlock; Kara Schripsema; Kai Haberlock; Tom Taylor; Hunter Taylor; Eugene Kurwicki; Mike Shobe; Sylvia Greenwood; Janet Merrill; Jill Camp; Marguerite Suttmeier, Doris Hansen, ...

Our Congregation - As we seek leaders to serve on our 2021 Council, Estimate a Budget for 2021, tend to Luther Park, enter into Advent and the preparations for Christ's Birth into our lives. Please pray for Susie Olson and Colleen Culwell as they adjust to their roles supporting the ministry we share. And, for all of us, that in our waiting we may rediscover the gifts of the Spirit so we may see each other in Christ's light and care for one another with His love.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- ◆ **Giving Tree:** Good work! All the names have been spoken for! Thank you to the WELCA donations and Jean Cafferty for tending to several of the names. Contact Tiffany Wright 208-290-8175 or tftwright08@gmail.com with questions or to arrange delivering your gifts. Wrapped gifts need to be returned by TODAY!
- ◆ **Zoom Fellowship:** An invite will be emailed when the online service for Sunday is ready. Please set aside time after or before your worship on Sunday to join other members of FLC for fellowship at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom.
- ◆ Holy Communion Mid-Week Service - On Zoom on Wednesday at 7 p.m.. Let Pastor Lori know if you have not received an invite via email on Wednesday morning or if you want to be added to the list. Also, if you would like to call in and receive the elements from one of the people attending on Zoom or another time. We can feed one another in this way.
- ◆ Christmas Eve - We are working on a pilgrimage (station like worship) that you can do at home or driving to First Lutheran Church. We will definitely all coordinate singing Silent Night together at a specific time even if we cannot be together physically. Details will come soon for how we can come and bring our gifts of adoration before the baby born for us.