

## **Third Sunday of Advent Sunday, December 13, 2020**

### **Introduction to the day**

“Rejoice always,” begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. “All God’s children got a robe,” go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever. **Amen.**

Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Loving and forgiving God,  
**we confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another.**

**Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.**

People of God, hear this glad news: by God’s endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free— free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God’s love, comforted by Christ’s peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### **LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**

*Worship Team sings*

Jesus, the Light of the World.

*Congregation sings*

We’ll walk in the light, beautiful light,  
come where the dewdrops of mercy shine bright,  
O shine all around us by day and by night,  
Jesus, the Light of the World

*Repeat*

*Worship Team sings*

O, Jesus the Light of the World.

Third Sunday of Advent:  
**PREPARE for the Light**

Pastor: Advent is a time to prepare.

**Congregation: Prepare the way of the Lord.**

Pastor: Advent is a time to prepare our eyes to see the light of Christ.

**Congregation: Prepare the way of the Lord.**

Pastor: Advent is a time to prepare our hearts to receive the Word of Christ.

**Congregation: Prepare the way of the Lord.**

Pastor: Advent is a time to prepare to share the joy of Christ.

**Congregation: Prepare the way of the Lord.**

Pastor: Advent is a time to embrace the promise of Christ.

**Congregation: Prepare for Jesus, the Light of the World.**

*Candle Lighting*

This morning we light three candles. The first candle reminds us that Advent is a time to wait. The second candle reminds us that Advent is also a time to watch. The third candle teaches us that Advent is a time to prepare. We prepare ourselves in heart, soul, and mind, to welcome Jesus, the Light of the World.

*Closing Prayer*

God in heaven, help us to be people who wait on you, watch for you, and, with the help of your spirit, prepare for you. Continue to shine your light in our lives as we look at all you have done, all you are doing, and all that you will do. Amen.

**GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

**SCRIPTURE THEME OF THE DAY**

<sup>23</sup>“May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23

**GATHERING SONG: People, Look East**

- 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.
  
- 2 Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,  
one more seed is planted there.  
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,  
that in course the flow'r may flourish.  
People, look east, and sing today—  
Love, the Rose, 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.

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### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

### **SPECIAL MUSIC: Let Ev'ry Heart Prepare Him Room (Larson)**

#### **FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11**

A reading from Isaiah.

*Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.*

<sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
<sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
<sup>3</sup>to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.  
<sup>4</sup>They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

<sup>8</sup>For I the LORD love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.  
<sup>9</sup>Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.  
<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### **PSALM: Psalm 126**

<sup>1</sup>When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
then were we like those who dream.  
<sup>2</sup>**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.**  
**Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."**  
<sup>3</sup>The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we are glad indeed.  
<sup>4</sup>**Restore our fortunes, O LORD,**  
**like the watercourses of the Negeb.**  
<sup>5</sup>Those who sowed with tears  
will reap with songs of joy.  
<sup>6</sup>**Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,**  
**will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.**

#### **SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

A reading from 1 Thessalonians.

*Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.*

<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise the words of prophets, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil.

<sup>23</sup>May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: O Come, O Come Emmanuel**

5 O come, O Key of David, come,  
and open wide our heav'nly home;  
make safe the way that leads on high,  
and close the path to misery.

*Refrain*

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

**GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28**

The holy gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

*John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.*

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

<sup>19</sup>This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup>He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup>And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." <sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup>He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,  
'Make straight the way of the Lord,'"  
as the prophet Isaiah said.

<sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" <sup>26</sup>John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup>the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." <sup>28</sup>This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON "ACTIVE PERSEVERANCE WHILE WE AWAIT CHRIST'S RETURN "**

**HYMN OF THE DAY: God of Our Life, All-Glorious Lord**

1 God of our life, all-glorious Lord,  
be now and evermore adored!  
Into the op'ning of this day  
bring grace and love and peace, we pray.

- 2     Make clear our path, that we may see  
      where we must walk to be with thee  
      and ever listen for thy voice,  
      that we may make thy way our choice.
- 3     Give us thy help in ev'ry task,  
      nor let us fail of thee to ask  
      for grace in speech, for love in deed,  
      from wrongful actions to be freed.
- 4     At eventide then will we raise  
      a grateful heart in songs of praise,  
      and worship thee and thy dear Son  
      with God the Spirit, ever one.

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## **CREED**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

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

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. 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. 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.**

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. 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.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

### **PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**  
**OFFERING**

**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Generous God, you have created all that is, and you provide for us in every season. Bless all that we offer, that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing. In the name of Jesus, Emmanuel, we pray. **Amen.**

**BLESSING**

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, now and forever. **Amen.**

**SENDING SONG: Everlasting God**

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,  
We will wait upon the Lord,  
We will wait upon the Lord.  
Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,  
We will wait upon the Lord,  
We will wait upon the Lord.  
Our God, You reign forever,  
Our God, You strong Deliverer.

You are the everlasting God,  
the everlasting God.  
You do not faint,  
You won't grow weary.  
You're the defender of the weak.  
You comfort those in need,  
You lift us up on wings like eagles.

(repeat from the beginning)

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**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

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**Jesus, the Light of the World:**

**A Gospel Candle Lighting Ceremony for Advent**  
(Words & music by George D. Elderkin; Choral Setting by Joel Raney)