

First Sunday of Advent

Sunday, November 29, 2020

Introduction to the day

Stir up your power, and come! The psalmist's plea in Psalm 80:2 has become familiar to us in the Advent prayers. Isaiah wants God to rip the heavens open. Both cry out for an apparently distant, angry God to show up, to save, to restore. When we hear Jesus describing the coming of the Son of Man with stars falling from heaven, it can sound dire and horrible, not like anything we would ever hope for. But when we really look at the suffering of people God loves, we can share the hope that God would tear open the heavens and come.

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

JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (Elderkin/Raney) Worship Team

First Sunday of Advent:
WAIT for the Light

Pastor: Advent is a time to wait.

Congregation: We wait in hope for the dawning light.

Pastor: Advent is a time to wait for freedom from captivity.

Congregation: We wait in hope for the dawning light.

Pastor: Advent is a time to wait for comfort in our sorrow.

Congregation: We wait in hope for the dawning light.

Pastor: Advent is a time to wait for power in our weakness.

Congregation: We wait in hope for the dawning light.

Pastor: Advent is a time to wait for the end of darkness.

Congregation: We wait for Jesus, the Light of the World.

Candle Lighting

This morning we light the first candle. This candle reminds us that our hope is in Christ, and that God sent Jesus to be the Light of the World. As we begin the journey of Advent, may we learn to wait patiently, with hope and confidence that God's light will one day illuminate our darkened world.

Closing Prayer

God in heaven, as we begin this season of Advent, we pray that you will teach us to wait with patience, endurance, and trust. Remind us of your everlasting presence. Fill us with hope for the future and love for humanity. Bathe us in your eternal, loving light. 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

"He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 1:8

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.

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PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

SPECIAL MUSIC: We Are Singing, for the Lord is Our Light
(traditional Zulu song/arr. Hopson)

FIRST READING: Isaiah 64:1-9

A reading from Isaiah.

This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
 shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
²**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
 stir up your strength and come to help us.**
³Restore us, O God;
 let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.
⁴**O LORD God of hosts,
 how long will your anger fume when your people pray?**
⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears;
 you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
⁶**You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
 and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**
⁷Restore us, O God of hosts;
 let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.
¹⁷**Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
 the one you have made so strong for yourself.**
¹⁸And so will we never turn away from you;
 give us life, that we may call upon your name.
¹⁹**Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
 let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
 and ransom captive Israel,
 that mourns in lonely exile here
 until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

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

GOSPEL: Mark 13:24-37

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

[Jesus said:] ²⁴“In those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON "GOD WILL CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN US TO THE END"

HYMN OF THE DAY: The Lord is My Light

refrain

The Lord is my light and my salvation,
The Lord is the strength of my life.
The Lord is my light and my salvation,
The Lord is the strength of my life.
So I will not be afraid
No, I will not be afraid
Because the Lord is my light,
the Lord is my light,

the Lord is my light.

verse 1

In the day of trouble
He will hide me;
He will keep me safe,
He will guide me through.

refrain

verse 2

In the darkest hour
He will keep me;
Evil has no power
when He shelters me.

refrain

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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, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

We pray for the ministry we share in Christ's name. Open our hearts to your call for justice, peace, and healing. Attune us to the needs of the world as you draw near. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for this planet in need of restoration: for devastated habitats, polluted waters, thawing ice, blazing fires, swelling floods, and long-lasting droughts. Renew the face of the earth and our relationship to it. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all people who care for others in our community and around the world. Fill them with compassion and the power to respond with justice for those who are oppressed, with welcome for those who are excluded, and with relief for those who suffer. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for people who are in crisis as the seasons change: for those without homes facing severe weather, for those who are unemployed or underemployed, and for those in poverty or facing food insecurity. (*Local feeding or housing ministries may be named*). Relieve their burdens, sustain their bodies, and ease their minds. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the people in our families and congregation who live with depression, anxiety, chronic pain, addiction, and other invisible illnesses (*especially*). Ease their suffering and support them when they struggle. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We give thanks for the lives and witness of those who died while waiting for justice, peace, or healing, those whose names we know and those whose names are known only to you. Sustain all who still yearn for the completion of your redeeming work. 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.**

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.**

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.

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: Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

- 1 Rejoice, rejoice, believers,
and let your lights appear;
the evening is advancing,
and darker night is near.
The bridegroom is arising
and soon is drawing nigh.
Up, pray and watch and wrestle;
at midnight comes the cry.
- 2 The watchers on the mountain
proclaim the bridegroom near;
go forth as he approaches
with alleluias clear.
The marriage feast is waiting;
the gates wide open stand.
Arise, O heirs of glory;
the bridegroom is at hand.
- 3 The saints, who here in patience
their cross and suffrings bore,
shall live and reign forever
when sorrow is no more.
Around the throne of glory
the Lamb they shall behold;
in triumph cast before him
their diadems of gold.
- 4 Our hope and expectation,
O Jesus, now appear;
arise, O Sun so longed for,
o'er this benighted sphere.

With hearts and hands uplifted,
we plead, O Lord, to see
the day of earth's redemption
that sets your people free!

Text: Laurentius Laurenti, 1660-1722; tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1823-1907

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)