

Third Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2023

10:15 am

Prelude

Welcome

"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 the holy Trinity, ✚ one God, who opens the heavens and draws near to us with salvation. **Amen.**

God is patient and merciful, desiring all to come to repentance. Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Everlasting God, **you love justice and you hate wrongdoing. We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness that make us reluctant to work against oppression. We are complicit in systems of exploitation. We choose comfort over courage. We are careless with creation's bounty. Look upon us with mercy. Turn our hearts again to you. Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways for the sake of our waiting world. Amen.**

Hear these words of assurance: God clothes you with garments of salvation and covers you with robes of righteousness. In the tender compassion of ✚ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. God's covenant is eternal, and God's blessing rests upon us all. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn ELW #242

"Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn"

- 1. Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning. Sing out your joy, for soon he is born, behold! The Child of our longing. Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together, he opens wide the heav'nly door and lives now inside forever.**
- 2. To us, to all in sorrow and fear, Emanuel comes a-singing, his humble song is quiet and near, yet fills the earth with its ringing; music to heal the broken soul and hymns of loving kindness, the thunder of his anthems roll to shatter all hatred and blindness.**

- 3. In darkest night his coming shall be, when all the world is despairing, as morning light so quiet and free, so warm and gentle and caring. Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in wonder, the weak be raised above the strong, and weapons be broken asunder.**
- 4. Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night, though dark the winter and cheerless, the rising sun shall crown you with light, be strong and loving and fearless. Love be our song and love our prayer and love our endless story; may God fill ev'ry day we share and bring us at last into glory.**

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Prayer of the Day

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.

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Readings and Psalms

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

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.

- ¹The 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;
- ²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
- ³to 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.
- ⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

⁸For 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.
⁹Their 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.
¹⁰I 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.
¹¹For 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.

Psalm: Psalm 126

¹When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream.
²**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."**
³The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed.
⁴**Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses of the Negeb.**
⁵Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy.
⁶**Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, will come again with joy,
shouldering their sheaves.**

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

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.

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

²³May 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. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. I am sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you. *Alleluia.* (Matt. 11:10)

The Holy Gospel according to the book of John, beginning with the first chapter. **Glorify to you, O Lord.**

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

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.

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

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

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

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

The Gospel of our Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

Hymn of the Day: ELW #239 "Hark, the Glad Sound"

- 1. Hark, the glad sound! The savior comes, the Savior promised long; let ev'ry heart prepare a throne and ev'ry voice a song.**
- 2. He comes the pris'ners to release, in Satan's bondage held. The gates of brass before him burst, the iron fetters yield.**
- 3. He comes the broken heart to bind, the bleeding soul to cure, and with the treasures of his grace to enrich the humble poor.**
- 4. Our glad hosannas, Prince of peace, your welcome shall proclaim, and heav'n's eternal arches ring with your beloved name.**

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Apostle's 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.**

Peace

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

Offering

Offering Hymn ELW #686 "We Give Thee I Own" 1st verse

- 1. We give thee but thine own, whate'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.**

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Offering Prayer

God our provider, by your merciful hand abundance springs up from the earth. Receive and bless these gifts of your own bounty. Let them be a sign of your steadfast love and faithfulness for all people, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Preface

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.

Thanksgiving at the Table

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Lord's Prayer

**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.**

Invitation to Communion

In this meal, righteousness and peace meet together. Come, take your place at the table.

Communion Distribution

Distribution Hymn ELW #253 "He Came Down"

- 1. He came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love; hallelujah forevermore.**
- 2. He came down that we may have light; he came down that we may have light; he came down that we may have light; hallelujah forevermore.**
- 3. He came down that we may have peace; he came down that we may have peace; he came down that we may have peace, hallelujah forevermore.**
- 4. He came down that we may have joy; he came down that we may have joy; he came down that we may have joy; hallelujah forevermore.**

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Post-communion Blessing

Prayer after Communion

Blessing

The God of peace bless you, the love of Christ sustain you in hope, and the anointing of the Spirit ✝ remain upon you now and forever. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn ELW #251 "My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness"

- 1. My soul proclaims your greatness, Lord; I sing my Savior's praise! You looked upon my lowliness, and I am full of grace. Now ev'ry land and ev'ry age this blessing shall proclaim great wonders you have done for me, and holy is your name.**
- 2. To all who live in holy fear your mercy ever flows. With mighty arm you dash the proud, their scheming hearts expose. The ruthless you have cast aside, the lowly throned instead; the hungry filled with all good things, the rich sent off unfed.**
- 3. To Israel, your servant blest, your help is ever sure; the promise to our parents made their children will secure. Sing glory to the Holy One, give honor to the Word, and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all adored.**

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Dismissal

Go in peace. Keep awake.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude

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