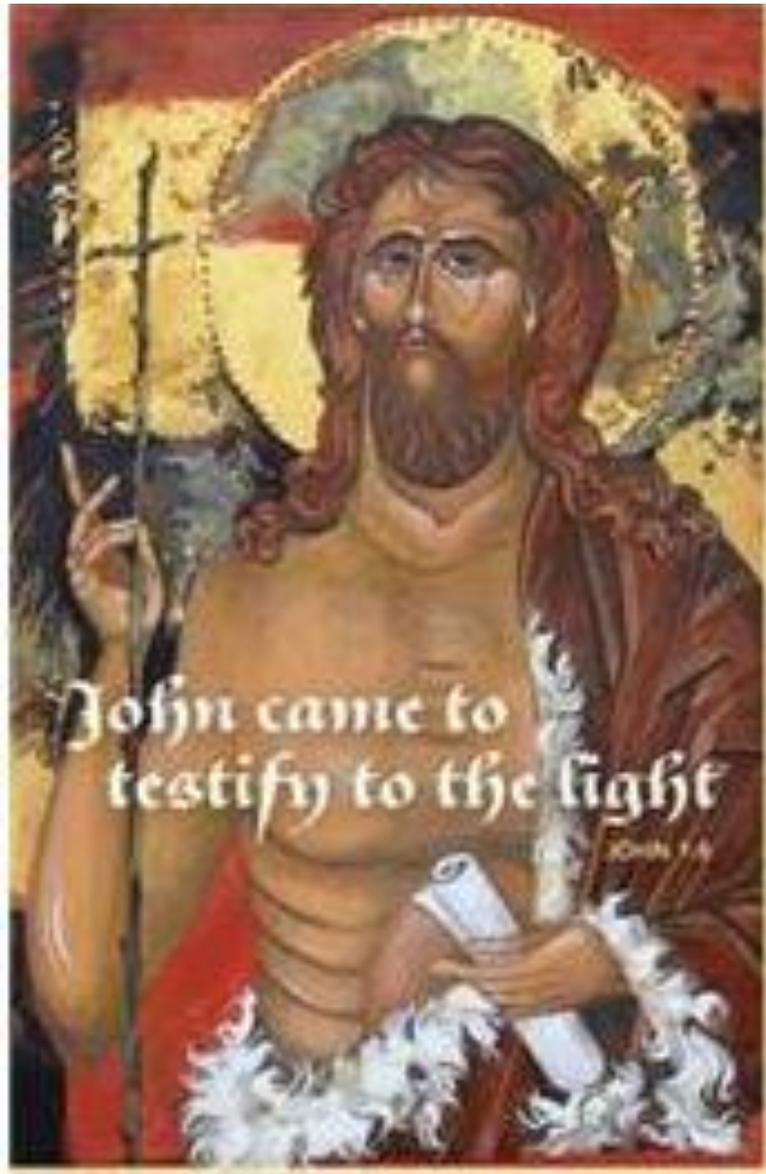


December 13, 2020

Third Sunday of Advent

ELW Service of the Word



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.

GATHERING

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

THE ADVENT WREATH – Get your 3 candles ready

One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting in the midst of growing darkness strengthen some of the Advent images found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of greens is clearly an image of everlasting life, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent and the growth of light. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its evergreen branches lead the household and the congregation to the evergreen Christmas tree. In many homes, the family gathers for prayers around the wreath.

Third Week of Advent – light candles

Blessed are you, God of might and majesty, for you promise to make the desert rejoice and blossom, to watch over the strangers, and to set the prisoners free.

As we light these candles, satisfy our hunger with your good gifts, open our eyes to the great things you have done for us, and fill us with patience until the coming of the Lord Jesus.

O ransomed people of the Lord, come,

let us travel on God's holy way

and enter into Zion with singing. Amen.

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.**

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.**

KYRIE

Lord, have mercy: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ, have mercy: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord, have mercy: **Lord, have mercy.**

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.

WORD

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

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

A reading from Isaiah.

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.

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

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

A reading from 1 Thessalonians.

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.

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

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

***Alleluia.* I am sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you.**

***Alleluia.* (Matt. 11:10)**

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

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

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 the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

APOSTLES' 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

On this third Sunday of Advent, we join in prayer as we await God's salvation, responding to each petition with the words "Mighty Savior, come and save us." *A brief silence.*

God of prophets and preachers, strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, and lay leaders. Protect Christians who are persecuted for the faith. While churches await a full return to assembly worship, empower the baptized with your faithful Spirit. Embed your word in our hearts. *A brief silence.*

We pray for the church: **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of creation, grant relief to endangered animals and plants. Protect the rain forests. Provide for those who rely on nature's rhythms for their livelihood. Train us to dwell on this earth in such a way that all people may thrive. *A brief silence.*

We pray for the earth: **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of all lands, plant in the leaders of every nation a love of justice and a commitment to serve the common good. Calm tensions in the Middle East, and bring peace where civil conflicts rage. Release child soldiers from forced service. Equip regions to rebuild cities that have been destroyed by war. *A brief silence.*

We pray for the nations: **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of exiles and wanderers, give a homeland to refugees. Provide housing for those whose dwellings have been destroyed. Protect street people from the cold and be with teenage runaways. Uphold the work of ELCA Good Gifts, Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran World Relief, and all disaster relief organizations. Comfort all who feel isolated from others.

A brief silence.

We pray for all in distress: **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of the sorrowing and the brokenhearted, give health to the sick, relief to medical workers, and comfort to mourners. Attend to those with lifelong illness. We beg for an end to the coronavirus and a fair distribution of the vaccines. Receive our prayers for . . . *A brief silence.*

We pray for the sick: **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of each one of us, we await peace and justice, health and wholeness. Sustain us as we await your coming. Hear now our unceasing prayers. *A longer period of silence.*

We pray for ourselves: **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of sinners and saints, while facing sadness and death, we grieve; yet we offer you praise for all the saints, especially the martyr Lucy, those who have died of COVID-19, and those whose names we call out to you now. . . . At the end, gather us into the joy of your glory. *A brief silence.* We pray for your salvation. **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God beyond all things, God dwelling among us now, receive these prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ, who came, who comes, and who is coming now and forever. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

THANKSGIVING

OFFERING

As forgiven and reconciled people, we offer ourselves and our gifts to God.

WHY I GIVE

There are several reasons why we contribute to Peace in Christ.

First, it is our responsibility as Christians to support the ministries of our church and to give not reluctantly, but cheerfully. Second, we **want** to give and share the blessings that have been given us. We love Peace in Christ!

Ed and Laurie Owen

OFFERING 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.**

Thanksgiving for the Word: Advent

Holy God,

the Beginning and the Ending, our Hope as we wait,

we praise you for joining us to your people of old.

We bless you for your prophets who call us to righteousness
and promise a new earth with peace for all.

For the Word of your covenant, we thank you, O God.

We thank you, O God.

We praise you for the coming of Jesus our Lord,

who lifts up the lowly, heals the suffering world,

and proclaims your way of mercy and truth.

For your Word who is Christ, we magnify you, O God.

We magnify you, O God.

Send your Spirit on all who receive your Word.

Nurture our faith with your grace,

accompany us with your might,

and empower our zeal for your justice and joy.

For your Word through the church, we praise you, O God.

We praise you, O God.

All praise to you, holy God, today, tomorrow, and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

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

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

SENDING

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tuesday - 10am Women's Gather Bible Study
- 6:30pm Men's Bible Study Acts
Wednesday - 10am Advent Morning Prayer
Thursday - 6:30pm Women's Bible Study Joshua

BIRTHDAY PRAYER (Andrea)

Watch over your child(ren)____, O Lord as (his/her/their) days increase; bless and guide (him/her/them) wherever (he/she/they) may be. Strengthen (him/her/them) when (he/she/they) stand(s); comfort (him/her/them) when discouraged or sorrowful; raise (him/her/them) up if (he/she/they) fall(s); and in (his/her/their) heart(s) may your peace which passes understanding abide all the days of (his/her/their) life (lives); through Jesus Christ our Lord. **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.**

DISMISSAL

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