

December 2 & 6, 2020
2nd Sunday in Advent

GATHERING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

HOLDEN: EVENING HYMN

HOLDEN: EVENING THANKSGIVING

HOLDEN: PSALM 141 – “Let My Prayer Rise Up”

HOLDEN: MEDIATION

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

For the second week in Advent, we focus on peace. In John 14:27, Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

Two purple candles are lit.

Prince of Peace, reveal yourself to us today. We need peace in our lives, our homes, our families, our church, and our whole world. Help us to slow down and seek out the peace you provide, so we may become peacemakers for ourselves and others. In your name, Prince of Peace, we pray. Amen.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 40:1-11

A reading from Isaiah.

In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God’s people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God.

¹Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins. ³A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” ⁶A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. ⁷The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. ⁹Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” ¹⁰See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. ¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

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

PSALM: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Righteousness shall prepare a pathway for God. (Ps. 85:13)

1 You have been gracious to your land, O Lord; you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.

2 You have forgiven the iniquity of your people and blotted out all their sins.

8 I will listen to what the Lord God is saying; for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.

9 Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you, that your glory may dwell in our land.

10 Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

11 Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

12 The Lord will indeed grant prosperity, and our land will yield its increase.

13 Righteousness shall go before the Lord and shall prepare for God a pathway.

SECOND READING: 2 Peter 3:8-15a

A reading from 2 Peter.

This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God.

⁸Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. ¹¹Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? ¹³But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ¹⁵and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

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

CHILDREN'S SERMON

So today we continue in our journey for Advent and today we get to light our second candle. I'm wearing my blue Thrivent shirt because blue is the color for Advent. Now there are some different explanations about what we could say this candle represents, but one such idea is that it represents peace. I want you to stop for a minute and think about things that maybe cause you not to feel at peace. Maybe it's a fight with a brother or sister. Maybe it's how you feel before a big test or a piano recital. There are lots of things that can make us lose sight of a sense of peace. Now, when you are in those moments, what brings you peace? Do you take a deep breath? Do you call someone you know will listen to you? Do you try to talk to that person and understand where they are coming from? Do you pray? Do you sing? I want you to make a list of ways you can feel peace. I also want you think of ways you can help other people feel peace because Jesus gives us all peace in our hearts and helps us to share that peace with others.

Likewise, this candle is also sometimes called the Bethlehem candle. In this candle, we remember Mary and Joseph's long journey to Bethlehem. For us, when we hear Bethlehem, we think "where Jesus was born" but for those who lived during Jesus' time, they'd also know that it was a small, piddly, not significant little town. Not at all where you would expect a king to be born. But, Jesus was born in an unexpected place.

This week, your job is to be a detective and look for Jesus in unexpected places around you, too. Maybe it's in someone you don't like. Maybe it's at a store or in your living room. Maybe it's some kind words that warmed your heart.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-8

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

The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; ³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' " ⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

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

SERMON

A few of you noted that I should take a picture by my Christmas tree when sharing my messages if I'm taping from home. Well, I'll do you one better. I'll bring my Christmas tree to church. For those who can't see, I have an under two foot tall felt tree with fabric ornaments here. We actually also have a flat felt tree on the wall in our house, too. This is the life of someone with a one year old. We decided to not put up the tree this year as 1) Landon's toys have taken over our living room and it is too much a hassle to figure out otherwise and 2) Landon is more and more mobile and loves to pull up on things, so we were too scared to put the tree up for fear it would fall down. So, this is our tree, which we love, though isn't quite what some of you might have been picturing.

I like the idea of doing a message by the Christmas tree because, what many of us often forget, is Christmas trees are messages in themselves. The History channel website describes the following: Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition as we now know it in the 16th century when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. Some built Christmas pyramids of wood and decorated them with evergreens and candles if wood was scarce. It is a widely held belief that Martin Luther, the 16th-century Protestant reformer, first

added lighted candles to a tree. Walking toward his home one winter evening, composing a sermon, he was awed by the brilliance of stars twinkling amidst evergreens. To recapture the scene for his family, he erected a tree in the main room and wired its branches with lighted candles.¹

World Vision goes on to describe Martin Luther's tree like this: So one day he [Luther] cut one down and brought it into the house, thinking to bring some of its beauty into his home to fight against the bleakness of the winter. He wanted it to stand there "evergreen" as a reminder to his children that when the world was at its bleakest moment — sad and helpless and covered with a weight of sin — God sent his Son, everlasting life itself, to bring hope in the midst the dark and chill. He explained to his children that the tree is green in the winter like our faith in Christ. It stays fresh even in a time of trouble. Our faith in Christ stays green even in sorrow. It stays alive even in the midst of despair. Then Martin Luther put candles on the tree, saying, "The candles remind us of the star that led Wise Men to the Christ child." That was probably the first decorated tree.²

This year, many traditions may not happen, but many of us will put up our tree. As we do so, may we remember that this tree isn't just meant to be a place marker put gifts, but rather, the tree itself is meant as message and a symbol that points to Jesus, the story of Christmas, and the truth that Jesus always enters into the darkest places and brings life, light and hope.

Today, we hear about John the Baptist in our text, another person whose entire life pointed to Jesus. If you go or went to the Love INC Light show, you will see Landon's Fisher price Nativity set on display, as well. (Poor kid, his mom is taking all his toys as church props this week.) Like most Nativity scenes, you'll find Jesus in a manger, Mary, Joseph, the wise men, some shepherds and, in his case, even some animals. But, no John the Baptist. For all the nativity scenes I've looked at, I've never seen one with John the Baptist, but his role is a crucial one. John the Baptist points the way for Jesus and prepares the path. The Christmas story starts in an unexpected place, in the wilderness, a place of chaos and scarcity, with someone calling out with a message of hope. It starts with an unusual person, literally, a very unusual person, someone who ate locusts and honey and wore camel hair, as being the voice of truth. He sets the stage for the One we are waiting for.

Many times when I hear Christians talk, they speak about "being and example" for others. For Lutherans, this doesn't fit so well with our sense of faith. I think, we would more often, say that we are simply sinners in need of grace, as well. But, we *are* like John the Baptist. We point to the One who is the source of grace. Whatever wilderness we find ourselves in, however chaotic, barren or unsure it seems, we assure people that Jesus is coming... and already here.

¹ <https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas-trees>. "History of Christmas Trees." history.com.com editors. Accessed December 1, 2020.

² <https://www.worldvision.org/christian-faith-news-stories/origins-decorating-christmas-tree>"The Origins of Decorating the Christmas Tree." Marilee Pierce Dunker. Accessed December 1, 2020.

Today, as we are in a wilderness of sorts, we pause our hearts and focus in a new way so we can hear the voices of the John the Baptists in our lives. We pause to hear words of hope. We stop so we can be reminded of Christ's power in our lives.

May our lives be like Christmas trees in the world, reminding people of the life and hope that comes in the darkest time of year. May our lives share the light of Christ. May our lives be like John the Baptist's life. May we be voices in the wilderness declaring, "Prepare the way of the Lord."

APOSTLES CREED (ELW p. 126)

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

OFFERING & CGC MOMENT

Our winter clothing ministry through Love INC has begun to receive more people who are looking for items. Thank you to the team of individuals who have assisted people who are in need of objects. If you know of someone in need of assistance, they should contact Love INC for voucher and to set up a time with one of our volunteers.

HOLDEN: THE ANUNCIATION/THE MAGNIFICAT

OFFERTORY – Music

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.

HOLDEN: LITANY AND PRAYERS

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

CLOSING PRAYERS/LORD'S PRAYER

COMMUNION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

SENDING OF COMMUNION

HOLDEN: FINAL BLESSING

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Office Hours - Monday—Thursday 8:00 am – 12:00 pm (noon) —1:00 - 4:30 pm & Friday 8:00 am—12:00 pm (noon).

Due to the rising numbers of Covid-19 infections, we will not have in-person worship or youth activities through January 19. Council will revisit this decision at their January meeting. **Services** will be on-line or drive-in. You can drive to the church on Wednesday or Sunday and listen to the service on FM 107.9 on your radio. We will have bulletins and communion supplies in the mailbox in the parking lot and by the front steps. There will be ushers to direct you. **There will only be on-line services on December 9 & 13 as this is the Children’s Christmas Program.**

Gift Cards will only be available in the office during office hours. Please call ahead to see if someone is available to get you cards. Thank You!

Christmas Program

Christmas is here! Time for the Christmas Program. The plan is this year is to have live reporters on the scene in Bethlehem, reporting live with interviews of the characters as we look at the birth of a Savior. We will be taping online (Zoom) and families will be helping in that process. Come see the Christmas story as you haven’t seen it before-reported live to your computers!

The Card Ministry members would like to thank everyone for purchasing our cards! During these uncertain times, members continue to make cards at home. Sales from the cards have helped to fund the food ministry, coat ministry and Love INC. We continue to make cards that are sent to the shut-ins. If you would like to be a part of this ministry, contact Darcy Poppema or Janet Zierke. There is a job for everyone. Join the fun!

2021 Offering Envelopes will be available for pick up in your mailbox by Wednesday, December 16. Please pick them up during office hours and reminder to not use them until January 2021 as some of the numbers that you had this year have changed. Thank you.



The office will be closed Thursday, December 24 and Friday, December 25 for the Christmas Holiday.

Christmas Services – Drive-In (FM 107.9) & On-Line ONLY
Wednesday, December 23

6:00 PM—Traditional candlelight communion service with Christmas hymns.

Thursday, December 24

4:00 PM—Traditional candlelight communion service Christmas hymns.

8:00 PM—Traditional candlelight communion service with Christmas hymns.

Friday, December 25

9:00 AM—Intimate traditional communion service with Christmas hymns.

2020 Offering – The last day to get your offering in for 2020 will be Monday, December 28. Please drop it off during office hours. All offering received through the mail will need to be in before Christmas. This allows us to get it deposited for this year. Thank you!



Annual Reports are due in to the church office by
Wednesday, December 30. Please get your reports in by
this date as we will be sending out the reports this year
and Natalie will need a few extra days to get the reports in
the mail on time. Thank you!