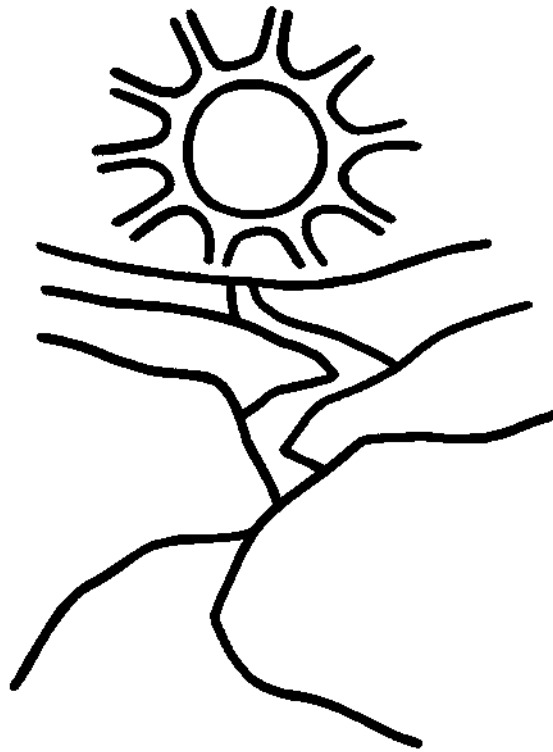


3rd Sunday of Advent
Adaptive Worship Service
December 13, 2020



1812 North Highland Avenue
Clearwater, Florida 33755
Ministers: The People of Grace Lutheran Church

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Pastor: Rev. Jefferson Cox

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.

This is a special bulletin for Grace Lutheran Church. This bulletin is designed to be used at home by anyone who is baptized serving as the Worship Leader. If you use this bulletin for worship, either by itself or alongside our service on YouTube, please fill out the Attendance Record Form on our website: GraceCLW.com

ADAPTIVE SERVICE OF THE WORD

GREETING

Worship Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Congregation: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Worship Leader: 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.

Congregation: Amen.

FIRST READING

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Introduction to the Lesson: *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.*

Reader: 16 Be joyful always, 17 pray at all times, 18 be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Christ Jesus.

19 Do not restrain the Holy Spirit; 20 do not despise inspired messages. 21 Put all things to the test: keep what is good 22 and avoid every kind of evil.

23 May the God who gives us peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being—spirit, soul, and body—free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you will do it, because he is faithful.

After the reading...

Reader: The word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL LESSON

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Introduction to the Gospel: *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.*

Worship Leader: The Holy Gospel according to John the 1st chapter.

Congregation: Glory to you, O Lord.

Worship Leader: 6 God sent his messenger, a man named John, 7 who came to tell people about the light, so that all should hear the message and believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came to tell about the light. 9 This was the real light—the light that comes into the world and shines on all people. 19 The Jewish authorities in Jerusalem sent some priests and Levites to John to ask him, “Who are you?”

20 John did not refuse to answer, but spoke out openly and clearly, saying: “I am not the Messiah.”

21 “Who are you, then?” they asked. “Are you Elijah?”

“No, I am not,” John answered.

“Are you the Prophet?” they asked.

“No,” he replied.

22 “Then tell us who you are,” they said. “We have to take an answer back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

23 John answered by quoting the prophet Isaiah:

“I am ‘the voice of someone shouting in the desert:

Make a straight path for the Lord to travel!’”

24 The messengers, who had been sent by the Pharisees, 25 then asked John, “If you are not the Messiah nor Elijah nor the Prophet, why do you baptize?”

26 John answered, “I baptize with water, but among you stands the one you do not know. 27 He is coming after me, but I am not good enough even to untie his sandals.”

28 All this happened in Bethany on the east side of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

After the reading...

Worship Leader: The gospel of the Lord.

Congregation: Praise to you, O Christ.

GOSPEL MESSAGE—From Sundays and Seasons

Who Are You?

John knows who he is. When the Pharisees' messengers demand that John give his credentials, he confidently responds that he is on a divinely appointed mission to witness to the light of Christ. He references the Hebrew Scriptures, orienting himself within the

wider story of God’s relationship with Israel. John knows that his testimony is important.

It is notable that John also knows who he is *not*. In this conversation alone, he clarifies that he is not the Messiah, nor a reincarnation of Elijah, nor a prophet. He emphasizes that he is not even worthy to untie the sandals of the one who comes after him. In other words, John has the humility to admit that he is not Jesus.

The gospel writer says that John “confessed” these declarations about who he was and who he was not (John 1:20). This means that he freely gave public testimony, going “on the record,” so to speak.

Today, many Lutheran churches include a rite of communal confession during Sunday worship. When we confess together, we publicly declare who we are *not* by naming our captivity to sin. We are not God. We have not loved God wholeheartedly and have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Yet, confession also reminds us who we *are*. We are children of God. In the words of absolution, we hear the truth that we are completely forgiven by God, we are made alive in Christ, and we are strengthened with the power of the Holy Spirit (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, pp. 95–96).

The practice of repentance is a return to our baptismal vocation. We declare not only who we are but whose we are. We belong to God, who renews us to live in service of the gospel. Like John, we are witnesses to the light of Christ, and we are called to reflect that light as it shines in our lives and in our world.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

Prepare the Royal Highway vs. 1 & 4



- 1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
- 2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
- 3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
- 4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
Palm branch-es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772–1847; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
Music: BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN. Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.
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PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Worship Leader: Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

Prayer Leader: 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. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: 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 (*survivors of recent natural disasters may be named*). Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: We pray for the people in our families and congregation who live with depression, anxiety, chronic pain, addiction, and other invisible illnesses (especially Marc Calhoun, Linda Almond, Barbara Haseley, Duke Tieman, Betty Biddle, Cathi Adams, Michael Morales, Wade Buehler, Gloria Holtzclaw, Betty Daege, Dianne William, Rosemarie & George Smith, Gary Neal, Karen Bates, Rev. Lydia Villanueva and family, Don Eunis, Lorraine Reinhard, Bonnie Redler, Kathy Leotta, Brytt Mathis, Joseph Valentin, Rita Burneik, Bobby Schlegel, Hilda Taylor, George Clark, Jill Grote, Larry Timmons, Carl Stone, Neftali Garcia & family, Kelly Sullivan, Susan Gunn, Roy

Pruitt, Iris Valentin, Deacon Connie Puls, Joan Keeton, Steve Davis, Rose Marie Piff, Gary Mostrum, Vicki Kennedy, Gail Elder, Valerie Smutko, Jason Meadows, Missy, Penny, & Henry, Lisa & Ty Hauschild, Rob Rodriguez & family, Marcus de Souza Lima, Maria de Nazare & Michele Rios, Ana Agramonte, Bishop Pedro Suarez, Pastor Courtney Erzkus and family, Ralph Burson, Luanne Sekel, Lorraine Chavez, Seve Chacon, Pat Fredell, Skylar Favos, the family and friends of of Ethan Burgess, and all those suffering from natural disasters [including all those impacted by COVID-19, Hurricanes Laura, Sally and Delta, and Western wildfires], violence, & terror, and the family & friends of the 280,000+ people in the US & the 1.5 million+ people worldwide who have died from COVID-19). Ease their suffering and support them when they struggle. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Worship Leader: Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Congregation: Amen.

OFFERING

Offerings to the mission and ministry of Grace can be made online at GraceCLW.com (look for the "Donate" button), or (for now) by mailing a check to Grace Lutheran Church, 1812 N. Highland Ave. Clearwater FL 33755. Thank you for your continued financial support during these uncertain times. You can fill out your attendance form on our website as well.

OFFERING PRAYER

Prayer Leader: Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Congregation: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Worship Leader: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray in the language closest to our hearts.

Congregation: 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.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD

Worship Leader: Let us pray. O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

Congregation: Amen.

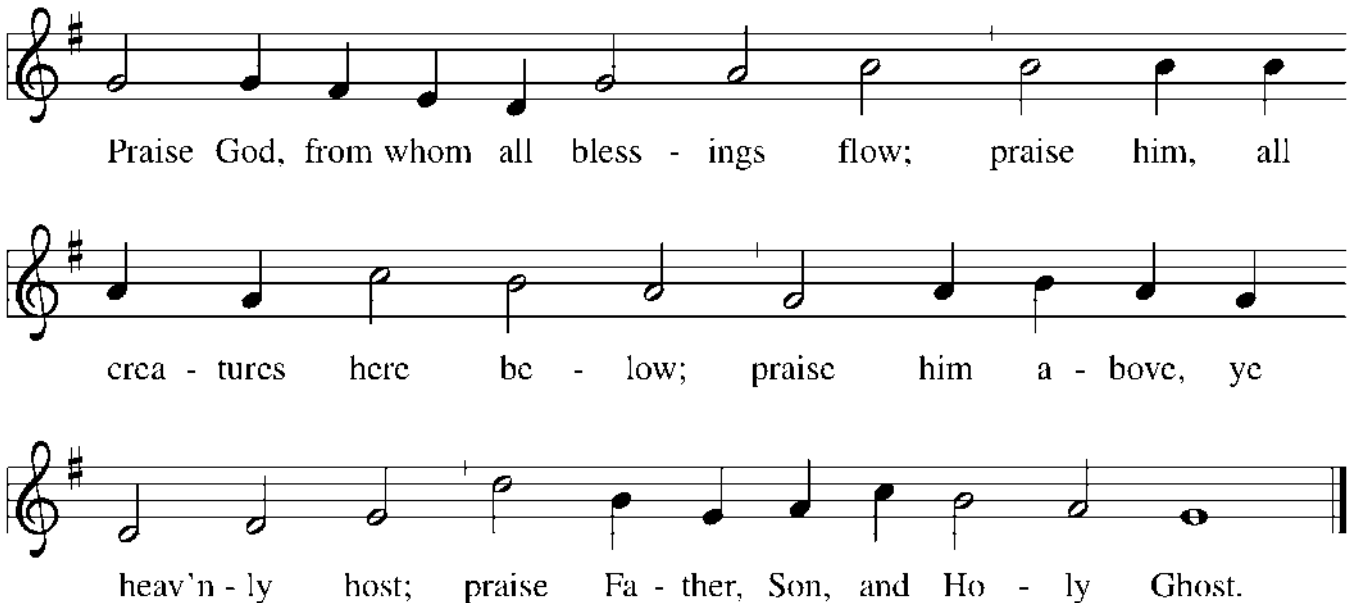
BLESSING

Worship Leader: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace .

Congregation: Amen.

SENDING SONG

The Doxology



Praise God, from whom all bless - ings flow; praise him, all
crea - tures here be - low; praise him a - bove, ye
heav'n - ly host; praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.

Text: Thomas Ken, 1637–1711

Music: OLD HUNDREDDTH, Louis Bourgeois, 1510–1561

DISMISSAL

Pastor: Together we have heard God's Word and joined in prayer, we have given and have been forgiven. Now our service of worship has ended, and our service to the world begins! Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

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