

*2nd Sunday of Advent &
The Celebration of the 60th
Anniversary of Grace Lutheran Church
December 6, 2020*



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Welcome! John calls people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord's coming. The reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.

This is a special bulletin for Grace Lutheran Church. We have closed the Sanctuary to the general public amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. 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

SERVICE OF THE WORD

PRELUDE

Scenes of Advent

by Wendy Roth

WELCOME

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Worship Leader: Let us pray. Blessed are you, God of hope, for you promise to bring forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse who will bring justice to the poor, who will deliver the needy and crush the oppressor, who will stand as a signal of hope for all people. As we light these candles, turn our wills to bear the fruit of repentance, transform our hearts to live in justice and harmony with one another, and fix our eyes on the root of Jesse, Jesus Christ, the hope of all nations. O people of hope, come,

Congregation: let us rejoice in the faithfulness of the Lord. Amen.

CANDLELIGHTING CAROL *Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah* vs. 2



- 1 Light one can-dle to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 2 Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 3 Light three can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 4 Light four can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.



He shall bring sal - va - tion to Is - ra - el, God ful - fills the prom - ise.
He shall feed the flock like a shep - herd, gent - ly lead them home - ward.
Lift your heads and lift high the gate - way for the King of glo - ry.
He is com - ing, tell the glad tid - ings. Let your lights be shin - ing!

Text: Wayne L. Wold, b. 1954
Music: TIF IN VELDELE, Yiddish folk tune
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APOSTOLIC 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: Let us pray together the Prayer of the Day.

Congregation: Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever . Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 40:1-11

Introduction to the Lesson: *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.*

Reader: 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.

After the reading...

Reader: The word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

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

The psalm for the day is read responsively with the Advent refrain sung first and then at each “R”.



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

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

⁸I 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.

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

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

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

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

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

SECOND READING 1 Peter 2:1-9

Introduction to the Lesson: *On the occasion of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of Grace Lutheran Church in Clearwater, Florida, we are reminded of the great privilege, and great responsibility, of being called God's holy people.*

Reader: 1Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. 2Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation — 3if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. 4Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and 5like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." 7To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner," 8and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

After the reading...

Reader: The word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL LESSON

Mark 1:1-8

Introduction to the Gospel: *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.*

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

Congregation: Glory to you, O Lord.

Worship Leader: 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.”

After the reading...

Worship Leader: The gospel of the Lord.

Congregation: Praise to you, O Christ.

GOSPEL MESSAGE—From Sundays and Seasons

Pointing to Christ

Mark’s gospel opens with fanfare: a herald announcing the good news that the Lord is on the way! It’s time to prepare for the Savior! The role model for this process of preparation is an unusual character. He lives in the wild, wears animal skins, and eats insects. Because of his extreme lifestyle, John the Baptist is often portrayed as a madman living on the fringes of society.

Yet, the text makes clear that John was a respected faith leader. People from all over the region were coming to him to be baptized. In John’s context, living in the desert and eating a foraged diet were signs of spiritual commitment, not lunacy. We might imagine John as a precursor to the Christian desert mothers and fathers who came after him, wise teachers who lived in voluntary isolation. People made a point to come hear what these teachers had to say.

John used his influence to point to Jesus. Although he had a popular ministry of his own, John understood that his call to prepare the way for Jesus involved humility and service. He told others he wasn’t even worthy to untie Jesus’ sandals, a sentiment that was meant to elevate Jesus, not to demean John. He wanted to communicate how transformative Jesus’ ministry would be. “I have baptized with water,” John proclaimed, “but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mark 1:8).

As we declare in our baptismal rite, that same Holy Spirit calls us into baptism & seals us with the mark of Christ forever. We, like John, are called to humble service for the sake of God’s mission in the world, to use our unique gifts & vocations to point to Jesus. We become messengers proclaiming the good news: God has come to dwell with us.

SERMON by Pastor Jeff & ANNIVERSARY GREETING from Bishop Suarez

HYMN OF THE DAY

Comfort, Comfort Now My People

vs. 1 & 2



- 1 “Com - fort, com-fort now my peo - ple; tell of peace!” So says our God.
- 2 For the her-ald’s voice is cry - ing in the des - ert far and near,
- 3 Straight shall be what long was crook - ed, and the rough - er plac - es plain.



Com-fort those who sit in dark - ness mourn-ing un - der sor - row’s load.
call - ing us to true re - pen - tance, since the reign of God is here.
Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, as be - fits God’s ho - ly reign.



To God's peo - ple now pro-claim that God's par - don waits for them!
Oh, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way.
For the glo - ry of the Lord now on earth is shed a - broad,



Tell them that their war is o - ver; God will reign in peace for - ev - er.
Val - leys, rise to greet the Sav - ior; hills, bow down in hum - ble fa - vor.
and all flesh shall see the to - ken that God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

Text: Johann G. Olearius, 1635–1711; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.
Music: FREU DICH SEHR, *Trente quatre psaumes de David*, Geneva, 1551

APOSTLES' CREED

**Congregation: 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

Worship Leader: God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

Prayer Leader: Faithful God, you teach us to wait for you with faithfulness and patience. Sustain and support us in our doubts and questions. Nurture our faith as we discern and enact your mission. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: We give thanks to you for the members and the ministry of this congregation: for those who had the vision to begin this congregation, those who sustain its present ministry, and those who will carry its mission forward into the future. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: Steadfast God, you never tire of seeking justice. Where people suffer from discrimination, judgment, and injustice, speak words of truth and comfort. Lead us toward a world where faithfulness will sprout underfoot and righteousness rain down from above. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: Tender God, you know sorrow and joy alike. We pray for those in our families and congregation who are not joyful in this holiday season. Comfort those who grieve, be a companion to all who are lonely, tend those who are sick or struggling with depression, and gather all people in your healing embrace (*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, Lisa & Ty Hauschild, Bishop Pedro Suarez, Pastor Courtney Erzkus and family, Ralph Burson, Ellen Duncan, Luanne Sekel, Lorraine Chavez, Seve Chacon, Pat Fredell, Skylar Favos, Marcos de Souza Lima, Maria de Nazare & Michele Rios, Steve Murray and his mom, the family and friends of Ethan Burgess, and all those suffering from natural disasters [including all those affected by COVID-19; and Western wildfires], from violence, & terror, and the family & friends of the 231,000+ people in the US & the 1,210,000+ people worldwide who have died from COVID-19). Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: Leading God, you ask us to make uneven ground smooth. Make even the disparities between your people. Sustain and support people with physical and intellectual disabilities. Accompany disability advocates who work for a world accessible to all. Teach us to celebrate the great diversity in our midst. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Prayer Leader: Eternal God, we give thanks for the saints who have prepared your way in the wilderness and taught us to continue their faithful work, especially Nicholas of Myra and those within our Memorial Garden. Make their generous lives an example for all. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Worship Leader: Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, 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 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 also fill out your attendance form on our website.***

OFFERTORY



Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right
spir-it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take
not your Ho-ly Spir-it from me. Re-store to me the joy of
your sal-va-tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir-it.

Music: Richard W. Hillert, b. 1923

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OFFERING PRAYER

Prayer Leader: 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.

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:
The Lord be with you,

Congregation:
AND AL-SO_ WITH YOU

Worship Leader:
Lift up your_ hearts,

Congregation:
WE_ LIFT THEM TO THE LORD

Worship Leader:
Let us give thanks, to the Lord_ our_ God.

Congregation:
IT IS RIGHT TO GIVE HIM THANKS AND_ PRAISE!

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 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.

Congregation: Amen.

SENDING SONG

Prepare the Royal Highway vs. 1 & 2



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!



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!



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!

Refrain



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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DISMISSAL

Worship Leader: 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. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.