

2nd Sunday of Advent

December 5, 2021



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Welcome! Forerunners and messengers advance the advent of our God. While John the baptizer's voice in the wilderness may be the principal focus of the day, Malachi's prophecy could as easily herald the coming Christ as forerunner of the Lord of hosts. Finally all the baptized are called to participate in the sharing of the gospel. In so doing we prepare the way for the coming of Jesus and assist all people in capturing a vision of the "salvation of God."

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 or by following our online service. 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,

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

Let us pray. Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge of your salvation; 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

Isaiah 25:6-9

Introduction to the Lesson: *God announces a covenant with Israel. A messenger like Malachi (his name means "my messenger") will prepare the way for the coming of the Lord by purifying and refining God's people, as silver and gold are refined.*

Reader: ¹See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; ³he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

After the reading...

Reader: The word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING

Philippians 1:3-11

Introduction to the Lesson: *The apostle Paul was the pastor of many new churches. He writes in this letter about his joy to be in partnership with the Christians of Philippi.*

Listen to how tender-hearted Paul, sometimes a stern preacher, is with his friends as he encourages them to grow in love and knowledge.

Reader: ³I thank my God every time I remember you, ⁴constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, ⁵because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight ¹⁰to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, ¹¹having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

After the reading...

Reader: The word of the Lord. **Congregation: Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 3:1-6

Introduction to the Gospel: John the Baptist is a herald of Jesus, whose way is prepared by "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." As we hear the careful record of human leaders, we sense the spectrum of political and religious authority that will be challenged by this coming Lord.

Worship Leader: The Holy Gospel according to Luke in the 3rd chapter.

Congregation: Glory to you, O Lord.

Worship Leader: ¹In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, ²during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ⁴as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

⁵Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;

⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

After the reading...

Pastor: The gospel of the Lord.

Congregation: Praise to you, O Christ.

GOSPEL MESSAGE—From Sundays and Seasons

Life in the Wilderness

The American Red Cross offers a training called Wilderness and Remote First Aid, during which participants learn skills to be used in case of emergencies such as low blood sugar, hypothermia, and burns when professional help is unavailable or far away. For someone experiencing a health crisis in a wilderness setting, a companion with remote first aid skills can be lifesaving.

When Luke introduces John the Baptist in today’s gospel, readers are told that the word of God came to John in the wilderness. The wilderness mentioned here brings to mind a place that is remote, sparsely populated, and rugged. Yet there is a sense of another wilderness being illuminated here as well—the wilderness of a messy world where some have wealth and status while others experience food insecurity, injustice, and homelessness.

It is into this wilderness that John the Baptist proclaims that one is coming through whom “all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6). Luke’s intentional listing of all the authorities in power (vv. 1-2) indicates that he wants readers to know just how different John the Baptist and, more importantly, the one he proclaims are from the rulers of the day.

People were drawn to the message John proclaimed, yet throughout his ministry John was clear that it wasn’t about him or his personal agenda but rather the work of God through him. He pointed to the Promised One and to the salvation Jesus offers. Like Jesus, John proclaimed a message that extended to the vulnerable and spoke of caring for our neighbors.

Similarly, as followers of Christ, we are commissioned to go into the wilderness, to bring good news to the little and the least, and to proclaim the work of God in our lives, through both our actions and our words. As we do, we bear witness to the promise that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the one who leads us from death to life.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

Comfort, Comfort Now My People



- 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

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Worship Leader: In this season of watching and waiting, let us pray for all people and places that yearn for God's presence.

A brief silence.

Prayer Leader: You send messengers into the world to proclaim the day of your coming. Make our bishops, pastors, deacons, and lay preachers confident in their preaching, that their words and our lives witness to your grace. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: Send your Spirit to all living creatures that are endangered. Provide them with shelter and care, and bring us into right relationship with the earth that you create and call good. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: Send leaders to our nations, cities, schools, and businesses to work on behalf of those who have lost parents, spouses, and loved ones; immigrants; the imprisoned; those living in poverty; and all who are oppressed. Make them bold in their commitments to justice and reconciliation. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: Send your servants to care for those who suffer. Use our ministries and our lives to reach out with compassion to those who are hungry, oppressed, lonely, or ill (*especially* Dale Willman, Jennifer Martinez, Bobby Crowel, Marc Calhoun, Linda Almond, Barbara Haseley, Duke Tieman, Betty Biddle, Cathi Adams, Michael Morales, Gloria Holtzclaw, Betty Daege, Dianne William, Rosemarie & George Smith, Rev. Lydia Villanueva and family, Don Eunis, Lorraine Reinhard, Bonnie Redler, Kathy Leotta, Brytt Mathis, Joseph Valentin, Rita Burneik, Bobby Schlegel, Hilda Taylor, Carl Stone, Neftali Garcia & family, Susan Gunn, Roy Pruitt, Deacon Connie Puls, Joan

Keeton, Rose Marie Piff, Vicki Kennedy, Gail Elder, Jason Meadows, Bishop Pedro Suarez, Pastor Courtney Erzkus and family, Ralph Burson, Ellen Duncan, Luanne Sekel, Lorraine Chavez, Skylar Favos, Audrey Fisher, April and David, Jennifer Martinez, Sonya and Abigail Stone, Dennis Bruder, Carolyn Milsap, and all those suffering from violence, terror, and natural disasters (including all those impacted by COVID-19 & this hurricane season). Grant them healing and wholeness. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Prayer Leader: Send prophets to speak difficult truths, even when they are poorly received. Embolden those who ask hard questions and challenge accepted ways. Instill in youth and elders alike a passion for pointing to Jesus in all things. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: We remember your saints, both those publicly celebrated, including those within our Memorial Garden, and those more humbly remembered. Confident that your work will be completed, we live in faith until the day of your coming. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Worship Leader: God of new life, you come among us in the places we least expect. Receive these prayers and those of our hearts, in the name of Jesus.

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 an Attendance Form on our website.** If you’re new to Grace through our online services, please consider sharing some information about yourself through our Attendance Form.*

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: Let us pray. Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God,

Congregation: we give you thanks and praise.

Worship Leader: By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, wisdom for life with you. For your Word of life, O God,

Congregation: we give you thanks and praise.

Worship Leader: Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God,

Congregation: we give you thanks and praise.

Worship Leader: Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; 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 God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus for whom we wait, + now and forever.

Congregation: Amen.

SENDING SONG

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry vs. 1, 2 & 4



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an - nounc - es
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; make straight the
3 We hail you as our Sav - ior, Lord, our ref - uge
4 Stretch forth your hand, our health re - store, and make us



that the Lord is nigh; a - wake and heark - en,
way for God with - in, and let us all our
and our great re - ward; with - out your grace we
rise to fall no more; oh, let your face up -



for he brings glad tid - ings of the King of kings!
hearts pre - pare for Christ to come and en - ter there.
waste a - way like flow'rs that with - er and de - cay.
on us shine and fill the world with love di - vine.

Text: Charles Coffin, 1676–1749; tr. composite

Music: PUER NOBIS, European tune, adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1571–1621

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. Christ is near.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Advent Recollections

by Jacob Morello

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