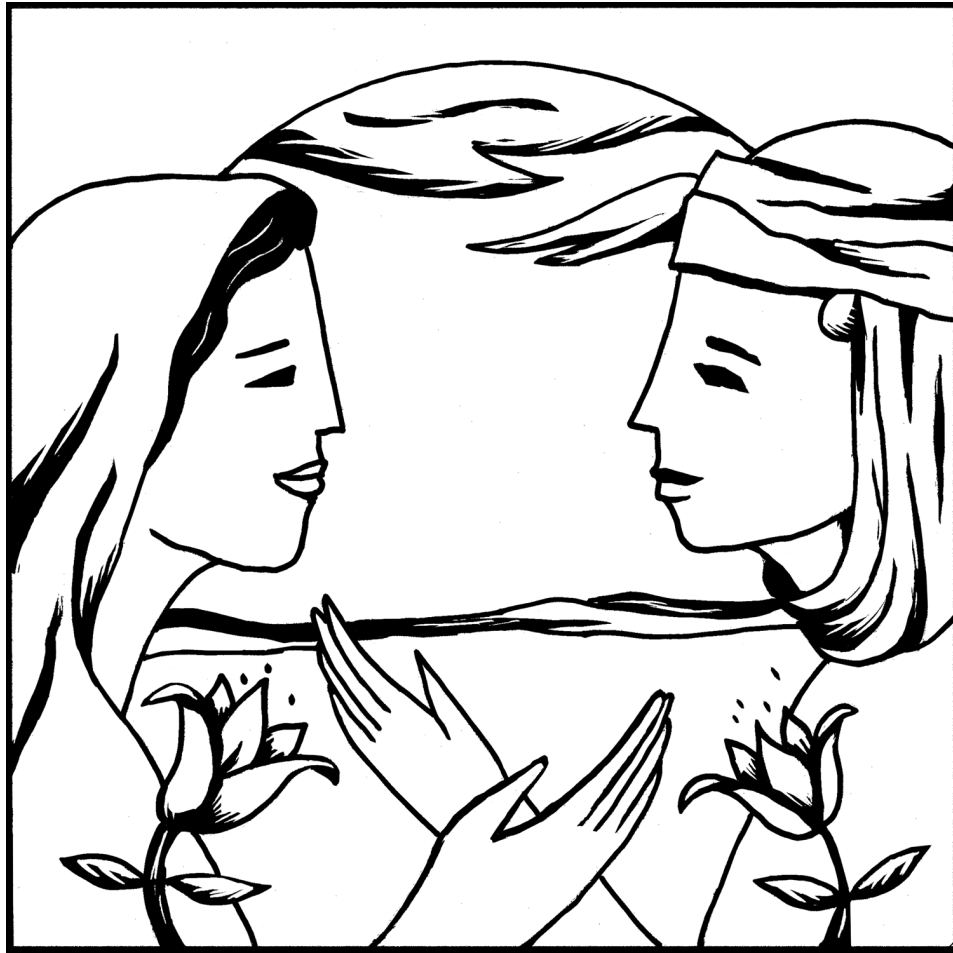


4th Sunday of Advent

December 19, 2021



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Pastor: Rev. Jefferson Cox

Welcome! Cradle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and Mary’s magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ’s advent is for “the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” It is the kind of tension in which the church always lives as when in holy communion—with high delight—“we proclaim the Lord’s death.”

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 hosts, for you promised to send a son, Emmanuel, who brought your presence among us; and you promise through your Son Jesus to save us from our sin. As we light these candles, turn again to us in mercy; strengthen our faith in the word spoken by your prophets; restore us and give us life that we may be saved. O house of David, come,

Congregation: let us rejoice, for the Son of God, Emmanuel, comes to be with us. Amen.

CANDLELIGHTING CAROL *Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah* vs. 4



- 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 your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Congregation: Amen.**

FIRST READING

Micah 5:2-5a

Introduction to the Lesson: *The prophet Micah, having pronounced judgment upon Judah, speaks of a future shepherd-king who, like David, will come from the small town of Bethlehem. (Ephrathah refers to the area around Bethlehem.) This king will restore Israel and bring peace. New Testament writers understood this passage to be referring to Jesus.*

Reader: ²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great

to the ends of the earth;
^{5a}and he shall be the one of peace.

After the reading...

Reader: The word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING Hebrews 10:5-10

Introduction to the Lesson: *The author of Hebrews uses the image of religious sacrifice to convey the significance of Christ's coming. Through obedient acceptance of God's will, Christ allows his own body to become the greatest sacrifice of all, one through which we are made a holy people.*

Reader: ⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, ‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God’
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me).”

⁸When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law),

⁹then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

After the reading...

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

GOSPEL LESSON Luke 1:39-55

Introduction to the Gospel: *Elizabeth, John's mother, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are two women filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. In Elizabeth's inspired greeting and Mary's song of praise we hear of a saving God who remembers, scatters, lifts up, and fulfills all things.*

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

Congregation: Glory to you, O Lord.

Worship Leader: ³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would

be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

⁴⁶And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

After the reading...

Pastor: The gospel of the Lord.

Congregation: Praise to you, O Christ.

GOSPEL MESSAGE—From Sundays and Seasons

A Companion in the Waiting

It is possible that not everyone who found out Mary was pregnant was as supportive as her cousin Elizabeth in our reading today. Since receiving the angel’s message, Mary likely felt uncertain, worried, scared, and alone plenty of times. So, when she visited her cousin Elizabeth and received Elizabeth’s blessing in words that echoed the angel Gabriel’s announcement, it must have been comforting to Mary. Hearing Elizabeth’s words of affirmation was a reminder to Mary that she was not alone in her journey and that God really was at work in her life.

At one point or another, we all need a reminder like this in our lives. It is not always easy to recognize God’s presence or to see just how God is at work in and through us. And sometimes much waiting is required until we see the fulfillment of God’s promises. That’s why we need people in our lives who will believe with us when we feel less than certain, walk with us through uncharted terrain, and support and pray for us along our journey.

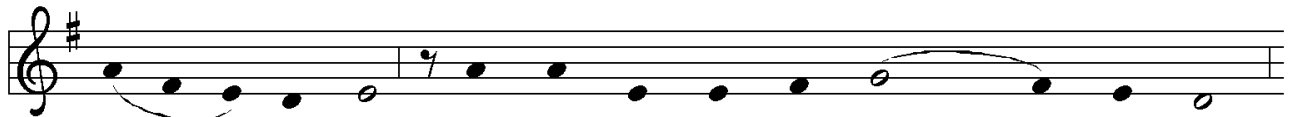
Our gospel presents us with two unlikely mothers. Their experiences remind us that knowing God is with us—and even that we have received God’s favor—does not mean our lives will be without hardship. We will still encounter challenges, experience grief, and have our hearts broken. But it does mean that in our waiting, and in our struggles, we are not alone. Through those who wait with us, and through the promise of Advent, we are reminded that Emmanuel is here, and has been with us all along.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel vs. 3 & 4*



3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on
4 O come, O Branch of Jesse, free your own from Sa-tan's



Si-nai's height in an-cient times you gave the law
tyr-an-ny; from depths of hell your peo-ple save,



in cloud, and maj-es-ty, and awe. Re-joyce! Re-joyce!
and give them vic-t'ry o'er the grave.



Em-man-u-el shall come to you, O Is-ra-el.

Text: *Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. composite
Music: VENI, EMMANUEL, French processional, 15th cent.
Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.

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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: Nurturing God, you give us life and care for our every need. Use the church’s gifts and ministries for your service, bringing your word to all who seek your transforming grace. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: Creator God, you proclaim your boundless love for all that you have made. Renew barren lands, polluted waters, and melting ice caps. Make us servants of your creation that brings forth abundant life. Lord, in your mercy,
Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: Righteous God, you bring down the mighty and lift up the lowly. Strengthen those who seek justice. Bless the work of community organizers, activists, journalists, and all who call our attention to imbalances of power. Lord, in your mercy,
Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: Compassionate God, you proclaim your love and mercy. Show your lovingkindness to teen parents and those who are pregnant. Comfort any struggling with infertility and those who await test results, are in treatment and hospice care, and others in need (*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: Gracious God, you fill the hungry with good things. Bless the feeding ministries of this congregation and community. Guide us to share your bounty with those who hunger or live in poverty. Lord, in your mercy,
Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: Faithful God, you stir up the hearts of those who love you. We give you thanks for those who, like Mary, were courageous in their witness, especially those within our Memorial Garden. Give us such courage until that day when you fulfill all things. 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: Let us pray. God of our waiting and watching, we offer the gifts of our hearts and our lives to the service of all your people. As we dedicate to you these expressions of faith, hope, and love, we ask you to bless those that made them so that their generosity may be an investment in the work of the Gospel in this place. Increase in us an awareness of your timing and purpose, so that we are prepared to resume the fullness of congregational life, through Christ Jesus, our pathway and our peace.

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

Joy to the World

vs 1 & 2



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re-
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their



ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him
 songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and



room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture
 plains re - peat the sound-ing joy, re - peat the sound-ing



sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.

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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