

# Worship in the Home: December 13, 2020

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## Worship in the Home

### Third Sunday of Advent, Year B December 13, 2020

*In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While you cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home. As with our prayers in the gathered assembly for worship, you are encouraged to prepare or adapt them locally for your context.*

“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.

*Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. During this season, you may wish to include an Advent wreath where you pray, and light three candles this week. You may light your Advent wreath each day this week. A prayer to use throughout the week appears at the end of this blog.*

*Then, one person may lead in this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

**Amen.**

Let us pray.

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

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.

**Amen.**

#### **First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11**

*Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn*

<sup>1</sup>The spirit of the LORD GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
the LORD has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;

<sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;

<sup>3</sup>to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display the glory of God.

<sup>4</sup>They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

<sup>8</sup>For I the LORD love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

<sup>9</sup>Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.

<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for God has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
and has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the LORD GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Psalm 126**

<sup>1</sup>When the LORD restored the for-<sup>l</sup> tunes of Zion,  
then were we like<sup>l</sup> those who dream.

<sup>2</sup>Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with<sup>l</sup> shouts of joy.  
Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great<sup>l</sup> things for them."

<sup>3</sup>The LORD has done great<sup>l</sup> things for us,  
and we are<sup>l</sup> glad indeed.

<sup>4</sup>Restore our for-<sup>l</sup> tunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses<sup>l</sup> of the Negeb.

<sup>5</sup>Those who<sup>l</sup> sowed with tears  
will reap with<sup>l</sup> songs of joy.

<sup>6</sup>Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,  
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

## **Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

*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.*

<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise the words of prophets, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil. <sup>23</sup>May the God of peace sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful, and will do this.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Gospel: John 1:6-8. 19-28**

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*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.*

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

<sup>19</sup>This is the testimony given by John when the Judeans sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup>John confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup>And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." <sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup>John said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

'Make straight the way of the Lord,'"

as the prophet Isaiah said.

<sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" <sup>26</sup>John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup>the one who is coming after me; the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." <sup>28</sup>This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **Reflection**

*Having read these readings, think on this:*

Mourning and waiting for comfort are the human condition. Right now, all the world waits for healing. Christians in the northern hemisphere have taken Advent darkness as a strong and evocative symbol for all human waiting, in all times. The darkness of this season has a certain quiet beauty, especially as it frames the growing presence of holiday lights, but — like John the Baptist — this season is not the light. John then bears witness to the Light that is Christ: "Among you stands one whom you do not know." Every Sunday celebrates the presence of the crucified and risen Christ in the power of the Spirit. This Third Advent Sunday celebrates how Christ stands present with us all now, hidden in the midst of and sharing all human waiting. Just so, he is already the garland God puts upon the earth, the springing up of righteousness like a blossoming garden, the grounds of our rejoicing. In our baptism and in the word we hear today, we are clothed like guests at God's marriage with the earth, and we are invited to turn to our mourning and waiting neighbors, being with them in comfort as Jesus Christ is, and working to repair the ruined cities.

*If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Hail to the Lord's Anointed" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 311), "Each Winter as the Year Grows Older" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 252). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.*

## [Hail to the Lord's Anointed](#)

### *Then pray these intercessions:*

On this third Sunday of Advent, we join in prayer as we await God's salvation, responding to each petition with the words "Mighty Savior, come and save us."

#### *A brief silence.*

God of prophets and preachers, strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, and lay leaders. Protect Christians who are persecuted for the faith. While churches await a full return to assembly worship, empower the baptized with your faithful Spirit. Embed your word in our hearts.

#### *A brief silence.*

We pray for the church:

#### **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of creation, grant relief to endangered animals and plants. Protect the rain forests. Provide for those who rely on nature's rhythms for their livelihood. Train us to dwell on this earth in such a way that all people may thrive.

#### *A brief silence.*

We pray for the earth:

#### **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of all lands, plant in the leaders of every nation a love of justice and a commitment to serve the common good. Calm tensions in the Middle East, and bring peace where civil conflicts rage. Release child soldiers from forced service. Equip regions to rebuild cities that have been destroyed by war.

#### *A brief silence.*

We pray for the nations:

#### **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of exiles and wanderers, give a homeland to refugees. Provide housing for those whose dwellings have been destroyed. Protect street people from the cold and be with teenage runaways. Uphold the work of ELCA Good Gifts, Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran World Relief, and all disaster relief organizations. Comfort all who feel isolated from others.

#### *A brief silence.*

We pray for all in distress:

#### **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of the sorrowing and the brokenhearted, give health to the sick, relief to medical workers, and comfort to mourners. Attend to those with lifelong illness. We beg for an end to the coronavirus and a fair distribution of the vaccines. Receive our prayers for . . .

#### *A brief silence.*

We pray for the sick:

#### **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of each one of us, we await peace and justice, health and wholeness. Sustain us as we await your coming. Hear now our unceasing prayers.

#### *A longer period of silence.*

We pray for ourselves:

#### **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God of sinners and saints, while facing sadness and death, we grieve; yet we offer you praise for all the saints, especially the martyr Lucy, those who have died of COVID-19, and those whose names we call out to you now. . . . At the end, gather us into the joy of your glory.

#### *A brief silence.*

We pray for your salvation.

#### **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

God beyond all things, God dwelling among us now, receive these prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ, who came, who comes, and who is coming now and forever.

**Amen.**

*If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Hark, the Glad Sound!" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 239), "People, Look East" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 248), "Surely God Is My Salvation" (All Creation Sings 926). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.*

[Hark, the Glad Sound](#)  
[Surely God Is My Salvation](#)

*Then conclude with these prayers:*

Let us pray.

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

We praise you, O God, for your creating Word!

You set the foundations of the world  
and gave breath to every living thing.

There is no Rock like you.

Blessed be God, forevermore;

**our hearts sing of your mercy and might!**

We praise you, O God, for your liberating Word!

In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed,  
you guided them by your strength to the land of promise.

You have lifted up the lowly.

Blessed be God, forevermore;

**our hearts sing of your mercy and might!**

We praise you, O God, for your life-giving Word!

Your Word became flesh and lived among us,  
full of grace and truth.

You have looked with favor on the lowliness of your servants.

Blessed be God, forevermore;

**our hearts sing of your mercy and might!**

Blessed be God, from this time on and forevermore,  
from the rising of the sun to its setting.

With Miriam, Hannah, and Mary,  
we give you thanks and praise for your  
creating, liberating, and life-giving Word!

Send us forth in the power of your Spirit  
to sing of your greatness and serve all people,  
following Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Offering**

*Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you.*

## **Offering Prayer**

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. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

*Then speak the Blessing:*

The Creator of the stars bless our Advent waiting,  
the long-expected Savior fill us with love,

the unexpected Spirit guide our journey,  
+ now and forever.

**Amen.**

*Here is a brief prayer to use as you light three candles on the Advent wreath this coming week:*

Blessed are you, O God. You have done great things for us, and we rejoice in you! Send us with the good news of your love to all who are sad or lonely.

**Amen.**

**Devotional Music Links:** For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[In A Lowly Manger Born](#);" "[Adam Lay Ybounden](#);" "[Prepare the Royal Highway](#)."

### **Readings for the Week:**

**Monday** (commemoration of John of the Cross, renewer of the church, 1591) Psalm 125. **Tuesday** Acts 3:17 — 4:4. **Wednesday** Mark 9:9-13. **Thursday** Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26. **Friday** Hebrews 1:5-14. **Saturday** John 7:40-52. **Fourth Sunday of**

**Advent** (commemoration of Katharina von Bora Luther, renewer of the church, 1552) 2 Samuel 7:7-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38.

**Daily Prayer Resources** are available, including simple forms of Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer; Responsive Prayer; and prayers for mealtimes and other occasions.

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able to provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain and selected hymns for limited use. Other suggestions provided above may be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. To purchase copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *All Creation Sings* for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648. Selected hymns from *All Creation Sings* will be provided for limited use.

Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

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***Thank you to those who clean the Church following worship.***

**In House Church Services have been cancelled until further notice.**

***Please keep in your prayers this week:*** Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Noah Klenken (Fred Fixsen's Nephew), Cal Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Bill Warner, David Warner, Emily (Ben & Casey's Daughter), Terry Newgard, Judy Wings, Steve Murdock, Bob Broberg.

Sorry no sermon for the 6<sup>th</sup>.

Pastoral Mid-week Message – December 9, 2020

**Listen Carefully**

Have you ever been frustrated trying to talk to someone simply not listening? Would you wives hold up your hand?

Television news host Hugh Downs told how frustrating it was to see journalists conducting interviews without really listening to the person they were interviewing. He called those types of conversations the “yeah-well interview.”

As an example of a “yeah-well interview,” Downs recalled an interview between a journalist and a former prisoner in the Kremlin. The former prisoner told of a painstaking escape attempt tunneling their way out of their prison cell. When they finally broke through, however, they realized they’d tumbled right into Josef Stalin’s office.

Now, what would you expect the interviewer to say at this point? Wouldn’t you expect him to ask, “Wow, what did you do next? or “That must have been a downer to discover you were in the office of the chief tyrant?” Oh, no! At this revelation, the interviewer interrupted with a question. “Do you have any hobbies?” he asked. Hugh Downs was astounded that the interviewer, faced with such a dramatic revelation, would cut off conversation that way. He obviously wasn’t even listening to the man he was interviewing. His failure to listen ruined what could have been an exciting interview. Isn’t it frustrating to feel like no one is listening to you? Don’t you want to yell, “Pay attention! This is important!” In the Bible, a man named John has come to the people of Bethany, near Jerusalem, with an urgent message – a message of the utmost importance.

“There came a man sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.” (John 1:6-9, NIV)

Can you imagine a message more important than that? “The true light was coming into the world.” Before he was even born, John was chosen for this most important job. An angel came to John’s future parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, and told them that they would have a son. And this son would be an instrument of God. In Luke 1, verses 16 and 17, the angel says, “Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

And so, from a young age, John knew his purpose in life: to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. To make them ready to receive the Messiah, the anointed One of God, the One who would restore the throne of Israel, and set the Israelites free from oppression of the Roman government. Actor Jimmy Cagney gave this advice to a fellow actor, “Walk in, plant yourself, look the other fellow in the eye, and tell the truth.”

That was John’s method of spreading the message. He didn’t use fancy language. He didn’t call attention to himself. He called people to repentance and washing away of sins; he even baptized them as a symbol of this new life they would lead when the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, came.

John’s task was to “make straight the way for the Lord.” And that is our task today. In Advent, we are to prepare a straight road to our hearts. How are we to do that?

To receive Jesus into your life is not the same thing as adding on a new room to a house. It requires instead that we demolish the old house, every part of it, and build a brand-new one, on a new foundation. We must give up our old way of life before we can receive the abundant life that Jesus came to give. We cannot receive the Messiah, His presence or message or mission, unless we are ready for it.

How will you prepare this Advent season? How will you “make straight the way for the Lord?” Are there unconfessed sins, fears, prejudices, habits, keeping you from a fruitful, committed Christian lifestyle? Is there apathy or unbelief in your life that needs to be confronted? Advent is not meant to be a warm and fuzzy season in the life of the church. It is a time that demands soul-searching, and repentance, and change.

Pastor Bill Sass