

# Worship in the Home: December 6, 2020

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## Worship in the Home

### Second Sunday of Advent, Year B December 6, 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.*

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.

*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 one candle. 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 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**

*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.*

<sup>1</sup>Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup>Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to the city  
that it has served its term,  
that its penalty is paid,  
that it has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all its sins.

<sup>3</sup>A voice cries out:  
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup>Every 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.

<sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

<sup>6</sup>A voice says, "Cry out!"  
And I said, "What shall I cry?"  
All people are grass,  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand forever.

<sup>9</sup>Get 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!"

<sup>10</sup>See, the LORD GOD comes with might,  
with an arm to rule;  
God comes bearing the reward,  
preceded by the recompense.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD will feed the chosen flock like a shepherd;  
God's arms will gather the lambs,  
God's bosom will carry them,  
and the LORD will gently lead the mother sheep.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13**

<sup>1</sup>You have been gracious to your<sup>l</sup> land, O LORD;  
you have restored the good for tune of Jacob.

<sup>2</sup>You have forgiven the iniquity<sup>l</sup> of your people  
and blotted out<sup>l</sup> all their sins.

<sup>8</sup>I will listen to what the LORD<sup>l</sup> GOD is saying;  
for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their<sup>l</sup> hearts to you.

<sup>9</sup>Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you,  
that your glory may dwell in our land.

<sup>10</sup>Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;  
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

<sup>11</sup>Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth,  
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

<sup>12</sup>The LORD will indeed grant prosperity,  
and our land will yield its increase.

<sup>13</sup>Righteousness shall go before the LORD  
and shall prepare for God a pathway.

### **Second Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-15a**

*This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God.*

<sup>8</sup>Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow concerning the promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

<sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. <sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?

<sup>13</sup>But, in accordance with God's promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by God at peace, without spot or blemish; <sup>15a</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Gospel: Mark 1:1-8**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*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.*

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

<sup>2</sup>As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;

<sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight the paths of the Lord,'"

<sup>4</sup>John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And 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. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>He proclaimed, "After me one who is more powerful than I is coming; the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water; but the one who is coming will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Reflection

*Having read these readings, think on this:*

We are indeed like grass. And we rightly join the crowd coming to John, confessing our sins. So we wait for the day of God, the day when the more powerful one comes, when the shepherd God gently leads the hurt exiles home, when all the earth and sky will be made new, when righteousness and peace will kiss each other. We wait. When will that day come? The Gospel of Mark itself is waiting: the book is named "the beginning of the good news." When will we receive the good news itself? Now. Here. The whole Gospel book shows us the crucified and risen Jesus Christ who is to be seen now among us, especially when we are able to assemble, when we remember how Christ has baptized us together in the Holy Spirit. But Christ is also seen among all the little, needy, waiting ones of the world. He is seen in the hiddenness of our homes whenever the voice of the word of God is heard. He is the powerful one hidden in our waiting world, God with us in the withering grass. The healing has begun. Jesus Christ by the poured out Spirit makes of us, even in these hard times, heralds to say to our cities — to say with our words and our deeds — "Here is your God."

*If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Comfort, Comfort Now My People" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 256), "All Earth Is Hopeful" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 266 / This Far By Faith 47). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.*

[Comfort, Comfort Now My People](#)

*Then pray these intercessions:*

On this second Sunday of Advent, let us pray for this weary world, responding to each petition with words from today's psalm, "In mercy, restore us."

*A brief silence.*

Come to the church, O faithful God. Assist our Bishop, our Pastor(s), and all who minister in the church. Show us what is your way and where are your paths, and awaken all the baptized to the guidance of your Holy Spirit.

*A brief silence.*

O God, be gracious to us:

**In mercy, restore us.**

Come to the Jewish people, O covenant God, at this their festival of Hanukkah. End the world's anti-Semitism, and bring peace to Jerusalem.

*A brief silence.*

O God, be gracious to us:

**In mercy, restore us.**

Come to the earth, O creating God. As the seasons change, protect all that lives. Mend the wounds of environmental damage, and restore balance to ecosystems.

*A brief silence.*

O God, be gracious to us:

**In mercy, restore us.**

Come to the nations, O sovereign God. Inspire governmental officials to strive for peace within their land and between countries. Remember the people of Afghanistan and Ethiopia. Guide the nations towards cooperative efforts when facing global issues.

*A brief silence.*

O God, be gracious to us:

**In mercy, restore us.**

Come to our country, O righteous God. Teach us how to end discrimination and to value diversity. Bring political parties into helpful conversation with each other. Assist the unemployed, and uphold people with physical and intellectual disabilities.

*A brief silence.*

O God, be gracious to us:

**In mercy, restore us.**

Come to all who are facing the coronavirus, O compassionate God. Protect the vulnerable. Heal the sick. Embrace the dying. Sustain medical workers. Prepare a vaccine. End this scourge.

*A brief silence.*

O God, be gracious to us:

**In mercy, restore us.**

Come to all who suffer, O merciful God. Empower us to feed the hungry in our nation and around the world. Gather into your healing embrace those who are afraid, lonely, sick, or struggling with depression. We pray especially for . . .

*A brief silence.*

O God, be gracious to us:

**In mercy, restore us.**

Come, O tender-hearted God, to each one of us, and receive our silent prayers.

*A longer time of silence.*

O God, be gracious to us:

**In mercy, restore us.**

Come to us, O eternal God, as you came to the saints. We remember especially St. Nicholas in his care for children, and those we name before you now: . . . Bring us with them through our wilderness into the fulfillment of your promises.

*A brief silence.*

O God, be gracious to us:

**In mercy, restore us.**

Come near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 249), "He Came Down" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 253), "We Are Waiting for Jesus" (All Creation Sings 905). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.*

[On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry](#)

[We Are Waiting for Jesus](#)

*Then conclude with these prayers:*

Let us pray.

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

Holy God,

the Beginning and the Ending, our Hope as we wait,

we praise you for joining us to your people of old.

We bless you for your prophets who call us to righteousness

and promise a new earth with peace for all.

For the Word of your covenant, we thank you, O God.

**We thank you, O God.**

We praise you for the coming of Jesus our Lord,

who lifts up the lowly, heals the suffering world,

and proclaims your way of mercy and truth.

For your Word who is Christ, we magnify you, O God.

**We magnify you, O God.**

Send your Spirit on all who receive your Word.

Nurture our faith with your grace,

accompany us with your might,

and empower our zeal for your justice and joy.

For your Word through the church, we praise you, O God.

**We praise you, O God.**

All praise to you, holy God,  
today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen.

**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 two candles on the Advent wreath throughout this coming week:*

Blessed are you, O God. Help us to hear John the Baptist calling us to prepare the Lord's way. Show us how to welcome others as Christ has welcomed us.

**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: "[Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers](#);" "[Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus](#);" "[Heir of the Highest Heaven](#)."

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

**Monday** (commemoration of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, 397) Psalm 27. **Tuesday** Isaiah 4:2-6. **Wednesday** Luke 1:5-17. **Thursday** Psalm 126. **Friday** Philippians 3:12-16. **Saturday** Habakkuk 3:13-19. **Third Sunday of Advent** (commemoration of Lucy, martyr, 304) Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126 *or* Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28.

**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.

Mid-week Message from Pastor Bill Sass – December 2, 2020

Ever wake up in the middle of the night, and your mind won't stop? Me, too. That also happened to Pastor Jon Hauser as related in the November 18 Brainerd paper. We join his thoughts:

"I got up and wrote the thoughts down, realizing they were a gift from God. I needed to hear them. They were for me. I decided to share them with you. Perhaps they speak to you.

The first thought was this: The size of the fight determines the size of the person. If you want to live a highly impactful life, stay away from small fights. There are a lot of issues that we can get caught up in, that are simply not worth it. They are a distraction from the important battles of life. There are some battles that have significant consequences internally and externally. Stay engaged in those battles. Fight brave and long for issues that hurt the heart of God. Fight long and hard against mindsets, lies and addictions that rob you of freedom, hope and peace. Trust God to go before you, fight on your behalf, walk with you into battle. Do not settle for average life. God offers us abundant life in Jesus Christ.

Fight for freedom!

Fight for emotional and spiritual freedom. Do not allow the wounds, sins or mindsets of the past to determine your future. Jesus died a brutal and humiliating death on a cross. He rose from the grave and came back to life to set you free. Bury your past in Christ. When you receive Jesus as your savior and leader, you are not simply turning over a new leaf, you are a whole new person...changed from the inside, out. Yes, we still have struggles. We still need oodles of grace and oodles of truth. We need God's love and His faithful discipline. So, engage in His way of living and fight against Satan's traps and filth. Don't allow the sin of others to cause bitterness in your heart. This is a trap. Fight for forgiveness.

Fight for unity!

Fight for authentic relationships. Isolation and separation leave us vulnerable. The COVID-19 pandemic has created isolation for many. We moved to a new city during the pandemic. On Sept. 5, I realized I could not wait any longer. It was time for me to build new relationships in our new city. I am so grateful for the doors God has opened.

Fight for self-respect!

You are priceless. You are amazing. You are not an accident or an after-thought. You are the result of a Divine Creator who brilliantly created you with unmatched uniqueness. Don't beat yourself up. Develop your self-worth from the heart of your Creator. God loves you more than you can comprehend. He longs to have you walk close to Him. He has done everything possible for you to walk with Him. Surrender to the only One worth surrendering to. Do not surrender to the opinions of others.

Last week was a hard week. I will continue to fight. You do the same. God bless you!"

Advent blessings,

Pastor Bill Sass