

Church of the Divine Love

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 4, 2022 10:15 A.M.

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

THE WORD OF GOD

Prayer before Worship – on insert

Processional Hymn **#56 vs. 3&4 – O come, O come, Emmanuel**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Kyrie page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Isaiah 11:1-10**

Psalm 72: 1-7, 18-19

Second Lesson: **Romans 15:4-13**

Gradual Hymn **#69 – What is the crying at Jordan?**

Gospel: **Matthew 3:1-12**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

Prayer for Storms and Hurricanes – on insert

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#67 – Comfort, comfort ye my people**

Doxology (sung)	
The Great Thanksgiving:	
Eucharistic Prayer D	page 372
Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	page 373
The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn #65 – Prepare the way, O Zion	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace – on insert	
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn#616 – Hail to the Lord's Anointed	

Sermon Sunday December 4th, 2022

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7,18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

Did you hear what John said? The wrath of God is coming. It doesn't matter who our family is. The ax is out and ready. Right now, the blade is against the tree. And the chopping is about to begin. Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is being cut down and burned. The unquenchable fire is raging, waiting to be fed the chaff. And that's just the beginning. He said a greater one is coming, one more powerful than himself is on the way.

After listening to John, it's tempting to look at the advent wreath, with its two lit candles, and see the season of Advent as merely the countdown to Christmas. Let's leave this wild man behind. We know Christmas came last year. It will come again this year just like it has for almost 2000 years. It's only a few more weeks away. So maybe we can dismiss John's message as allegory, metaphor, or symbolism.

But we can't do that. The Church says this viper sermon of John's is the gospel, the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew. For most of us, though, threats, anger, and judgment are not good news. We would rather hear and think about sweet baby Jesus. But John's not preaching a Christmas sermon. John doesn't mention a beautiful night with a bright shining star to guide us. There are no humble and gentle shepherds guarding their flocks by night. No wise men bearing gifts from afar. John's not looking at a manger scene where the little Lord Jesus lays down his sweet head. He seems to

have forgotten the innocent but faithful Virgin. And the name Jesus isn't even mentioned in today's gospel. This is Advent, the season when wrath, axes, and unquenchable fire are talked about as good news. John is looking for God to do something drastic right now. John's message is, "Repent, turn or burn!" His refrain is, "Wrath, axes, and fire. Wrath, axes, and fire." God's coming and God's going to get you.

I suspect that part of our discomfort with John and his name-calling, his preaching of wrath, axes, and fire is, or at least should be, that at some level we know he's right. When we look around our world, read the newspaper, watch the evening news, or examine our own lives we're confronted with the reality of John's sermon. Our world and our lives are not as they should be, as they can be, as God wills them to be. We could each name the sinful or broken places of our lives and world: anger, violence, greed, poverty, homelessness, war, lives controlled by fear, years of guilt that have crippled us. The list could go on and on. What do you find when you examine your life? What truth does St. John hold before you? What patterns of behavior destroy your life and relationships? Which voices distract and call you away from your most authentic way of being and living? What things do you do or say that hurt others or yourself? How do you deny or ignore your own holiness, the original beauty of your creation? Where in your life have you just gotten tired and lazy, unwilling to ask, seek, or knock? Do the examination, make the changes, and live a different life. Repent, change, not because you are bad, defective, or deficient but because you are worth it; because you have been created in the image and likeness of God, because God loves you, and God is coming.

There's only one sin worse than the evil itself and that is indifference to that evil. Indifference is more insidious than the evil itself; more universal, more contagious, and more dangerous. Often, we live such busy, exhausted lives that we have become indifferent to what is happening in the world, indifferent to the needs of another human being. Maybe our world view, even our church view, is so small that if something does not directly affect our lives or those we love then it is of no consequence to us. Sometimes the pain and fear in our lives causes us to be indifferent to those relationships that need forgiveness and reconciliation. Maybe you have become indifferent to yourself and can no longer see the original beauty with which God created you. Perhaps indifference has convinced you that your life is meaningless. Indifference comes in many different forms. It is always sneaky, often disguising itself as freedom or independence.

John's cry of repentance is the call to turn away from our indifference to engage, at a life-changing level, the coming kingdom, and the way that kingdom reorders our relationships and priorities. John's words are words of interrogation. Do we care enough to change our lives and the world in which we live? Do we love enough to get angry about the suffering and plight of other human beings – even if we've never met them? God does. That's why divine wrath, axes, and fire are good news. God loves enough to get angry. The good news is that our God is not indifferent. God is not indifferent to creation. God is not indifferent to the evil and suffering in this world. God is not indifferent to God's people. God is not indifferent to your life or my life.

God's concern and love for creation are the source of God's anger. Anger is not the opposite of love. Indifference is the opposite of love. The last thing we need is more indifference. The last thing we need is to hear from another that our very existence is meaningless. And God forbid that we should ever say or act as if another's very existence is of no consequence to us. God's anger is never the goal. The goal of divine anger is not punishment and retribution. Divine anger is the means, the instrument. The goal is

love and relationship. Divine anger recognizes and celebrates the existence, the sacredness, and the value of every human life. Divine wrath is God's expression of longing for us. It is God saying to you and me, you are worthy of my time and attention. Your lives are worthy of being judged. I care and love you enough to get angry when you settle for less than I am giving you, when you accept being less than you are called to be.

Wrath, fire, and axes are God's calling us to turn away from, to repent of our indifference. Where does indifference rule our lives? How have we become indifferent to ourselves, to others, even to God? In what ways does indifference deny you the Kingdom of Heaven? Wrath, fire, and axes are not about destruction or punishment. They are about life, love, and relationship. The unquenchable fire of God's love burns away our indifference. The healing acts of God cuts away all indifference. The wrath of God reminds us that God cares, and we matter. To name the places and ways of our indifference is the beginning of repentance and the Kingdom of Heaven has come just a bit nearer than it was before.

To miss the truth and good news in St. John's message is to miss the kingdom and our own life. Let's not let this happen. Find the holy discontent in your life. Repent. Turn around. Look again. The kingdom is right here. So, John the Baptist came to point people to the coming Jesus, to point people to true repentance, and to point people to the work of Jesus. May his coming impact us and the way we live. So let us enter Advent in hope, even hope against hope. Let us see visions of love and peace and justice. Let us affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage: Jesus Christ, the life of the world. **Amen!**

2 ADVENT	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	

MONDAY	8:00 AM	AA MEETING
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WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING
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THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS SALE
	8:00 PM	AA MEETING

SATURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS SALE
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3 ADVENT	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Roe Prosser	Jess Berbeck
Coffee Hour	Nolans	Prossers

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Give to all who suffer the refreshing waters of your compassion and healing. Make them dwell in the safety of your care even in the midst of all that troubles them. Especially we remember before you:

Grace Schinella	Harriet Capers	Bob Curley
John Mulligan	Arlene Goodenough	Celeste
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Deb P.
Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	Gabriel
Barbara Stinson	Michael & Family	Warren
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Anthony
Mo (Rachael)	Bill Conklin Sr.	Carolyn
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Ciara	Robert Sweat	Aidan
Elodie	Sophia	Carol K.
People of Haiti	Christopher & Family	Julia
Mary & Family	People of Ukraine	Tim

Nathan Treadwell

Bob Lazevnick

Art

Margaret

Victims of Hurricanes

Richard & Family

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.
Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Storms and Hurricanes

O God, you rule over all creation, which you have set free to act according to its nature. We know and love your world, which is also a world of randomness and chance. You are Lord of chaos as well as order. We pray to you for people caught in storms and hurricanes. We remember particularly those whose work is dangerous, police and firefighters, rescue workers of all kinds. You are known in storm and in calm, you are Lord of thunders, you moved across the hills of Judea. You are also a presence in stillness, a voice from silence. You spoke to Job in the whirlwind and quieted the

Sea of Galilee. Wherever we are, in storm or calm, we know your presence. Call us sometimes to storm, sometimes to calm, sometimes to wilderness, sometimes to silence. Call

us always to yourself, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn

but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that

all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince

of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions

and glory, now and for ever. Amen