

## Church of the Divine Love

### 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.

### Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,  
Lay my life before you,  
How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus and third verse starting with Spirit.

## Sermon Sunday December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Malachi 3:1-4; Canticle 16; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3: 1-6

### **Sisters and brothers in Christ,**

Last Sunday I spoke with you about the future, and I suggested that the coming of the future is a theme that runs throughout this Season of Advent. I wasn't talking about the foreseeable future, the future we plan and prepare for, the one we can reasonably expect to happen. I was talking about the unforeseeable future, the one that is beyond our knowing, power, and control, the one for which we hope against hope. That unforeseeable future is bigger than what we imagine ourselves capable or possible of. It holds the possibility of the impossible, a new life, a fresh start, a transformed life.

Haven't there been times in your life when you would have given anything for a new life? When you needed a fresh start? When you ached to have your life transformed? Or maybe you have felt your heart

break at the pain of the world. Maybe you were touched by the desperation of a woman or child you will never meet. Maybe you have wept over the seemingly endless acts of violence or injustice across the world. In whatever way those things have come up for you that was your longing for the unforeseeable future and the opening of yourself to the possibility of the impossible. That unforeseeable future is contained in the word of God that came to John, the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. It's the promise of Advent. It's the hope in today's gospel (Luke 3:1-6). It's at the heart of John's proclaiming a baptism of repentance. And the coming of that future, its advent in our lives, necessarily focuses our attention on the past. What do you see when you look at your past? What are the feelings and thoughts? For some the past is a painful memory, a chain that still binds, a lost chance, a failing grade. For others the past brings about a smile of gratitude, maybe nostalgia, or even a longing for the good old days. For most of us the past is probably a mixture of the two.

Regardless of how we view our past, regardless of what did or not happen back then, to the degree we are enmeshed, entangled, or enslaved to our past, we can expect the future to look like the past. We repeat the same patterns, tell ourselves the same old stories, and listen to same old voices. And not many changes. Life becomes static and we are stuck in the past trying to live a life that is no longer. Repentance, Luke 3:1-6, Future John's call for repentance is the call for us to face and deal with our past. While we cannot undo or alter the past, we can break free from it. When God holds sway, the past is dismissed. Where God rules, the past does not rule. That does not mean the past has no consequences for our future. It means that the past does not necessarily have to define us or determine our future. The question behind repentance, therefore, is not about what we have done or left undone, what has happened or not happened to us, but about what has laid claim to our life. The past reveals who and what has laid claim to our life.

The repentance John proclaims on God's behalf, then and now, demands a change of heart, a change of mind, a change in how we speak and act. It demands a change in our life's direction, a change in our country's direction, a change in our priorities and values. This change, this repentance, is not a onetime event. It's a process we live into. It has to become our daily practice, a way of being, living, and relating. In that regard, repentance is not so much about changing from bad to good, wrong to right, sinner to righteous, though there is certainly nothing wrong with any of those. It's about freedom from our past. It's about a change of heart that let's ourselves be laid claim to by another. It's about letting us be laid claim to by something new, something different, something unimaginable and impossible. Maybe that's the difference between John and all those other people named in today's gospel.

The word of God did not come to Tiberius, emperor of Rome. It did not come to Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea. It did not come to Herod, ruler of Galilee. It did not come to Philip, ruler of Ituraea and Trachonitis. It did not come to Lysias, ruler of Abilene. And it did not come to the high priests Annas and Caiaphas. Instead, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah. The word of God did not come to the palaces and headquarters of the powers that be. It came in the wilderness. It did not come to the emperor, the governor, the rulers, or the high priests. It came to a wild man, a prophet, a voice crying in the wilderness. The word of God laid claim to John's life in a way it did not lay claim on those other lives. Perhaps political power, economic security, and religious people certainly had already laid claim to their lives, whereas the powerlessness, insecurity, and uncertainty of the wilderness had laid claim to John's life. Maybe that's the gift, the grace, that the wilderness times of life bring us. And I wonder, which is it for you?

What has laid claim to your life? And in what ways has that claim bound you to the past and denied you a new life, a fresh start, a transforming future? Maybe it's fear, anger, disappointment, guilt, regret. Maybe it's loss, despair, or sorrow. Maybe it's busyness, ambition, the need for approval, to be successful. Maybe it's a broken relationship, a broken heart, a harsh and critical voice. There are thousands of claims being made on us. I don't want us to rehash the past and talk about what we could have or should have done, or how we can improve ourselves. That's not repentance and that's not what John is proclaiming in today's gospel. Those are just more fraudulent claims on our lives. I want us to let the past be our teacher, a voice that calls us into a new life. I want us to face and deal with our past in order to wake up, to break free, and let ourselves be more fully claimed by faith, hope, love; God's faith in us, God's hope for us, God's love of us. What would your life look like if the primary claims on you were faith, hope, and love? What doors would open to you? How would that change your relationships? How might you see and engage the world and others differently?

I don't know what claims your life today. I don't know the stories of your past. But I can tell you this. This repentance, this breaking free from the past, fills the valleys and low places of our lives, brings low the mountains and hill that were previously beyond our reach, straightens the crooked parts of our lives, and smooths the rough ways. What claims your life today? Which claims are fraudulent and need to be denied? And what would it take to open yourself to be laid claim to by something new, something different, something that promises the possibility of the impossible? I pray salvation has dawned in your life. I pray You have heard and submitted to the same message that John preached...repent and turn to God and be forgiven through the Lamb of God Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**DECEMBER 5, 2021**

**10:15 A.M.**

### **HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II**

#### THE WORD OF GOD

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

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (S-280 in hymnal) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Malachi 3:1-4**

Canticle 16 – The Song of Zechariah

Second Lesson: **Philippians 1:3-11**

Gradual Hymn **#53 – Once he came in blessing**

Gospel: **Luke 3:1-6**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form IV page 388

Confession of Sin page 360

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#76 – On Jordan’s bank vs. 1,2,3,5**

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

    Eucharistic Prayer C page 369

    Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal) page 362

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 **#444 – Blessed be the God of Israel**

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

**Christmas flower memorial envelopes are enclosed.**

**Please return by Sunday, Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>. Make checks payable to The Church of the Divine Love Altar Guild.**

2 ADVENT

10:15 AM      HOLY EUCHARIST, II      (also on zoom)

THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS SALE IS OPEN

FOLLOWING THE SERVICE

MONDAY      8:00 AM      AA MEETING

WEDNESDAY 7:00 PM      AL-ANON MEETING

THURSDAY    10AM-2PM    THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS SALE  
8:00 PM      AA MEETING

SATURDAY    10AM-2PM    THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS SALE

3 ADVENT

10:15 AM      HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II      (also on zoom)

11:15 AM      VESTRY MEETING

SUPPORT THE FOOD DRIVE – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

## 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:

|                    |                      |              |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Girard Bishop      | Chrissy Neville      | Bob Curley   |
| Nathan Treadwell   | John Loubengeiger    | Del          |
| Chris Dickson      | Kate Jones           | Julia        |
| Michael Echevarria | John Rocco           | Robert Sweat |
| Martinisi Family   | Michael & Family     | Warren       |
| Charlotte H.       | Bernie Walther       | Sylvia       |
| Mo (Rachael)       | Bill Conklin Sr.     | Laura        |
| Anthony Paribello  | Barbara Curran       | Taylor       |
| Ciara              | Elodie               | Gabriel      |
| Aidan              | Christopher & Family |              |

Victims of Natural Disasters

People of Haiti & Missionaries who were Kidnapped

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



