

**Monday, December 21, 2020 7pm**  
**The Longest Night**  
**A Blue Christmas Worship Service**  
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/wearepilgrim>  
Phone Streaming Toll Free **833.800.1492**

Preaching and Presiding: Pastor John Woods  
Worship Assistant: Carolyn Horner  
Pianist: Catherine Black

## **Prelude**

**A BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE**  
By RAY BEAVER

## **The Gathering**

## **Words of Welcome**

## **The Approach**

### **Call to Worship** (from Isaiah 9)

**Pastor:** *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God, or renewer."*

### **Opening Prayer**

**Asst:** God of Mercy,  
Hear us as we pray in this Advent Season for ourselves, for our families, and for all who live with the painful memories of loss. We ask for strength in this day, courage for tomorrow and peace with the past. We ask these things in the name of Christ who shares our life in joy and sorrow; through the death and new birth, despair and promise.

**Amen**

### **First Lesson**

Isaiah 40:1-2, 12, 27-31

**Pastor:** Our first scripture reading comes from the Book of Isaiah. It was written in a time when many of the people of Judah had been taken as captives into exile in Babylon, and were feeling crushed and without hope.

*"Comfort, O comfort my people." Says your God. "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins."*

*Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?*

*Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God?" Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

## **Responsive Psalm 121**

**Asst:** I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come?  
**My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

He will not let your foot to be moved. The one who keeps you will not slumber.

**He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.  
**The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.**

The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

**The Lord shall preserve your going out and our coming in from this time on and forevermore.**

## **Second Lesson**

Matthew 1 and 2

**Pastor:** The story of the first Christmas is not really a happy story but a story about life in the real world. Mary of Nazareth, who is engaged to the carpenter Joseph, discovers she is pregnant. Joseph does not want to embarrass Mary and plans to break the engagement privately. This was not an easy time for this couple. Their country was under Roman occupation and

King Herod who ruled Palestine for the Romans was known for his cruelty. These are not exactly ideal conditions for bringing a child into the world. In the midst of their turmoil, an angel—God’s messenger—speaks to Joseph in a dream and tells him to proceed with his marriage to Mary.

### **Reading**

Matthew 1:18-24

**Asst:** In the midst of Mary and Joseph’s joy over the safe birth of their son Jesus, a new crisis looms. King Herod orders the death of all children under 2 and so the Holy Family has to flee as refugees to Egypt. There they live for several years until King Herod dies and it is safe to return. Mary and Joseph felt God’s presence with them through all the hardships they had to ace.

### **Reading**

Matthew 2:7-23

**Asst:** Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean."

## Music

"The King Shall Come" ELW 260

## Gospel

John 1:1-14

**Pastor:** Matthew and Luke describe Jesus' birth in Bethlehem with stories of visits from shepherds and Magi. But John's gospel speaks of Jesus as God's Word for all humanity, as God's Word spoken through this one born into a hurting world. He also describes Jesus' birth as light in out of darkness.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and glory. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never overpowered it. The true light that enlightens all people was coming into the world. And the word was made flesh and lived among us; and we saw his glory, full of grace and truth."*

## Message

Yesterday's Pain

**Pastor:** In the godforsaken, obscene quicksand of life, there is a deafening alleluia rising from the souls of those who weep, and of those who weep with those who weep. If you watch, you will see

the hand of God  
putting the stars back in their skies  
one by one  
Yesterday's Pain  
Some of us walk in Advent  
tethered to our unresolved yesterdays  
the pain still stabbing  
the hurt still throbbing.  
It's not that we don't know better;  
it's just that we can't stand up anymore by ourselves.  
On the way of Bethlehem, will you give us a hand?  
Not celebrate?  
Your burden is too great to bear?  
Your loneliness is intensified during this Christmas season?  
Your tears have no end?  
Not celebrate?  
You should lead the celebration!  
You should run through the streets  
to ring the bells and sing the loudest!  
You should fling the tinsel on the tree,  
and open your house to your neighbors, and call them in to dance!  
For it is you above all others who know the joy of Advent.  
It is unto you that a Savior is born this day,  
One who comes to lift your burden from your shoulders,  
One who comes to wipe the tears from your eyes.  
You are not alone,  
for He is born this day to you.

"The Christmas Spirit" by Ann Weems

**Asst:** The Christmas spirit is that hope  
which tenaciously clings to the hearts of the faithful  
and announces  
in the face of any Herod the world can produce  
and all the inn doors slammed in our faces  
and all the dark nights of our souls  
that with God all things still are possible,  
that even now  
unto us a Child is born!

## INTO THIS SILENT NIGHT

**Asst:** Into this silent night  
as we make our weary way  
we know not where,  
just when the night becomes its darkest  
and we cannot see our path,  
just then  
is when the angels rush in,  
their hands full of stars.  
— Ann Weems

### Music

"Hark a Thrilling Voice is Sounding" ELW 246

### Responding to God's Word

#### **A Liturgy of Remembering with the candles of the Advent Wreath.**

##### **Pastor:**

This first candle we light to remember those whom we have loved and lost.  
We pause to remember. (*Pause while the first candle is lit*)

We remember their name, their face, their voice, the memories that bind them to us in this season.

##### **May God's eternal love surround them.**

This second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of jobs, the loss of relationships, the loss of health. We pause to gather. (*Pause while the second candle is lit*)

We gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God, asking that from God's hands we receive the gift of peace.

##### **Refresh, restore, renew us O God, and lead us into your future.**

This third candle we light is to remember ourselves this Christmas time.  
We pause to give thanks. (*Pause while the third candle is lit*)

We give thanks and remember these past weeks and months; the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the poignancy of reminiscing, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends, all those who stood with us. We give thanks for all the support we have known.

##### **Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.**

This fourth candle is lit to give light to our faith and the gift of hope which the Christmas story offers to us. We pause and remember. (*Pause while the fourth candle is lit*)

We remember that God who shares our life promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

**Let us remember the one who shows the way, who brings the truth and who bears the light.**

These lights in their brightness are only symbols, but as they burn and finally go out, we remember that suffering passes, though memory remains forever.

**Let us remember that though Christ has gone before us, he is ever with us.**

### **Prayers of the People**

**Asst:** In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for all the things we need, saying in the strength of faith "God, hear our prayer"; and responding together, and in your mercy answer.

For ourselves as we participate in whatever way we can this Christmas.  
God, hear our prayer.

**And in your mercy answer.**

For our families and friends that they may continue to help and support us.  
God, hear our prayer.

**And in your mercy answer.**

For the person we have loved that has died. For all the losses that we know, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise.

God, hear our prayer.

**And in your mercy answer.**

For all our family and friends that they may know love and peace and happiness in you.

God, hear our prayer.

**And in your mercy answer.**

For the peace proclaimed by the angels on the first Christmas, to come throughout the whole world.

God, hear our prayer.

**And in your mercy answer.**

**Pastor:** God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of us, your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled this Christmas, and to those who cannot yet admit the hurt they feel, the blessing we ask in the name of Christ who taught us to pray together, saying:

**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**

**Hymn**

*"O Come, O Come Emmanuel" ELW 257*

**Benediction**

**Pastor:**

**The Irish Blessing**

May the road rise up to meet you,  
May the wind be always at your back,  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
And the rains fall soft upon your fields;  
And until we meet again,  
May you be held in the warmth of God's hand.

**Amen**

**Postlude**