



Hope United Church of Christ

November 29, 2020

First Sunday of Advent

“I Believe in the Sun: Hope for Tomorrow”

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Crossing the Threshold

Pastor: This Advent, we are looking to hear words of comfort, of challenge and of good news. The prophet Isaiah and the four Gospel authors were writing in a time when people needed desperately to hear all of these as well. This first week, the prophet Isaiah and Mark, the Gospel that was written first, reassure the people that good news is beginning and yet they both say, “Make yourself ready! Raise your voices, change your hearts, get ready to be transformed, because now is the time.” Let us embrace hope that we can do what needs to be done to bring more light into the world.

I Believe in the Sun

*I believe in the sun, I believe in the sun,
even when, even when it's not shining.*

*I believe in the sun, I believe in the sun,
even when, even when it's not shining.*

Pastor: The place without light; the depth of night; the pit of unknowing.

Prayer

Pastor: Holy One, we thank you for the glimpses we catch of your gift of untiring hope. Even in the midst of fear, of challenge, of struggle. Even when our view is obscured by clouds of doubt, ignite the flame of hope within us...

People: ... that we might glow with its brilliance from the inside out.

Pastor: You are invited to light your first blue Advent candle – the Candle of Hope - at this time.

*I believe in the sun,
I believe in the sun,
even when... even when...
it's not shining.*

Pastor: Help us face this bleak night of the soul and embrace it as a womb of rebirth. Amen.

Call to Worship

One: The Father's voice bears witness to the Son.

Many: God has shown Godself to us.

One: The Son bows his head beneath the waters of the Jordan.

Many: God has shown Godself to us.

One: God's love is seen to the end of the world.

Many: God has shown himself to us. Let us be ready to receive the blessed gift of the Savior.

Invitation and Prayer of Confession

Holy and Loving God, we give thanks for the promise of this sacred season and for the joy we find in the Christ Child. Yet even as we rejoice, we recognize that we often fail to live with the hope of redemption. In this season of anticipation, we know that we are easily distracted by our own projects and preparation. We lose focus on the one who is the Source of our joy. Forgive us, God, and restore our hope in you. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

The promise of the season of Advent is the promise of Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus calls us to keep awake so that we are ready for God's arrival. Therefore, let us lay aside all those things that distract us from faithful watching for God. Friends, believe the Good News of the Gospel: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Passing the Peace

Let us offer one another the gift of peace.

May the Lord's peace be with you!

(If you are using this liturgy as a private devotion or participating in the live stream worship, please hold out your hands in blessing for all you are joined with in spirit. If you are participating in the live stream worship, please type in your peace greeting.)

Anthem *Prepare the Way* – Anderson

Prayers of the People/Lord's Prayer

One: May the Lord be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Let us pray:

... And we pray together the prayer Jesus taught us:

Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 40:1-11

¹ Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

² 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.

- ³ A voice cries out:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
- ⁴ 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.
- ⁵ Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."
- ⁶ 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.
- ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
- ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.
- ⁹ 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!"
- ¹⁰ See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
- ¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Mark 1:1-15

¹The beginning of the good news[£] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.[£]

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,[£]

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

- ³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"

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

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved;[£] with you I am well pleased."

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news[£] of God,[£] ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;[£] repent, and believe in the good news."[£]

SERMON "Entering with Joy"

SERMON HYMN #122 *Come O Long Expected Jesus* (see end of bulletin)

INVITATION TO OFFERING AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

We are profoundly grateful for your continued support of Hope UCC as we stay connected as a faith community in this time of social distancing and spiritual connection. We are continuing the ministry of our church throughout this pandemic and we thank you for making this possible through your gifts of your tithes and offerings. We now have two ways to make your offering: You are able to safely donate electronically using your credit card or ACH transfer. You can find the link on our church website (www.hopeuccqc.org). We also invite you to mail your offering to the church office. Thank you for your generosity- your commitment is vital to continuing our congregation's ministries and commitments. Hope Grows! And there is nothing- not even a global pandemic - that can stop it! ☺

BENEDICTION

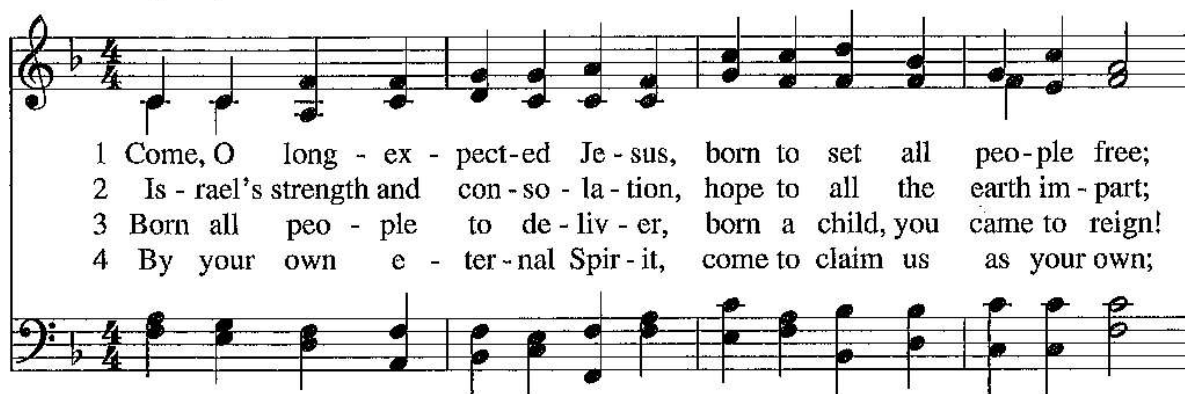
As we leave this place, take with you God's promise to be with us, the peace of the Holy Spirit, and the watchful perseverance of Jesus Christ. As God came into the world to know us, now go out into unknown places with the hope that has been given to us. Amen.

POSTLUDE

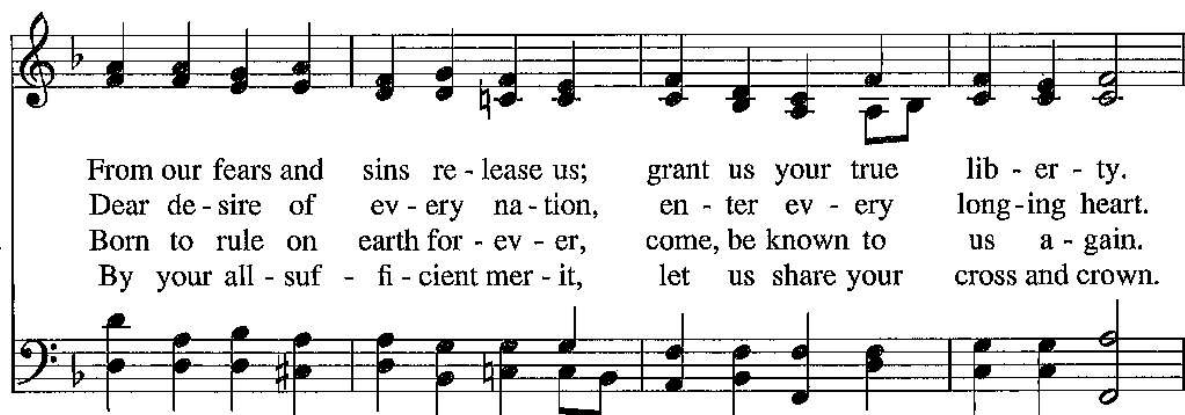
Come, O Long-Expected Jesus

122

Charles Wesley, 1744; alt.



1 Come, O long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set all peo-ple free;
2 Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope to all the earth im - part;
3 Born all peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child, you came to reign!
4 By your own e - ter - nal Spir - it, come to claim us as your own;



From our fears and sins re - lease us; grant us your true lib - er - ty.
Dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, en - ter ev - ery long-ing heart.
Born to rule on earth for - ev - er, come, be known to us a - gain.
By your all - suf - fi - cient mer - it, let us share your cross and crown.

Charles Wesley, the brother of John, was one of the students known as "Methodists" at Oxford University. He wrote hymns for every occasion. This is from his small collection Hymns for the Nativity.

Tune: STUTTGART 8.7.8.7.
Melody attrib. to Christian F. Witt (1660-1716)
from Psalmodia Sacra, Gotha, 1715
Alternate tune: IN BABILONE