

Home Worship December 6th 2nd Sunday of Advent

Welcome to worship. You may wish to gather bread and juice or wine for communion during worship. We are all grieving as the council made the decision to follow health department guidelines to avoid gatherings during the pandemic. Some may desire to worship elsewhere and the church understands. Please pray for the church during this difficult time. Advent candles will be lit if you desire to light yours.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever. **Amen.**

Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Loving and forgiving God, **we confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.**

People of God, hear this glad news: by God's endless grace
your sins are forgiven, and you are free—free from all that holds you back
and free to live in the peaceable realm of God.

May you be strengthened in God's love, ☩ comforted by Christ's peace,
and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Advent Candle Lighting

- 1 Light one candle to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
He shall bring salvation to Israel, God fulfills the promise.
- 2 Light two candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
He shall feed the flock like a shepherd, gently lead them homeward.

Prayer of the Day

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.

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

²Speak 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.

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

⁴Every 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.

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

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

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get 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!"

¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

¹¹He 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.

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

¹You have been gracious to your land, O LORD; you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.

²**You have forgiven the iniquity of your people and blotted out all their sins.**

⁸I will listen to what the LORD God is saying; for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.

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

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

¹¹**Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**

¹²The LORD will indeed grant prosperity, and our land will yield its increase.

¹³**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.

⁸Do 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. ⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. ¹⁰But 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. ¹¹Since 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, ¹²waiting 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? ¹³But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ^{15a}and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

The Holy Gospel according to Mark 1:1-8

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.

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;

³the 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."

The word of the Lord..... **Praise to you O Christ**

Sermon

There is no nativity or birth announcement in the book of Mark. No angels, no Holy Family, no baby in swaddling clothes. Mark is in a hurry for us to know and understand who Jesus is. Instead of Bethlehem story, Mark introduces John the Baptist to make the introduction of who Jesus is. His appearance is reminiscent of Elijah. Mark quotes the prophetic writing of Isaiah 40: “*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.’*”

Isaiah 40 is a very important writing. Isaiah speaks of the Babylonian Exile in which Jerusalem was destroyed and the people have lost their security because of sin. It is a perfect sermon. Isaiah begins with the words “Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.” Isaiah reflects the “crying out in pain” of God’s people. 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. ⁷The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.”* This text is often spoken at funerals. It is a lament. We lament when we feel withered and faded and fragile especially during this time of the pandemic. Isaiah knows how the Babylonians felt. We also have those feelings today as we face our insecurities. Many people in our nation and the world are facing poverty, despair, possibly being evicted from their homes and nervous about the future due to this pandemic.

The most important words in Isaiah and echoed in Mark are: *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.’*” This is the hope in Jesus coming to baptize us with the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist like Isaiah was also a model preacher. He preached law, calling for repentance, and gospel, pointing to Christ. What was most important about John was his message. He did not ask others to live in the unusual lifestyle that he chose; he preached the coming Christ. John knew that he was not worthy even to untie the thong of Christ’s sandals—and yet he also knew that his calling was to be the messenger, sent to preach Christ and thereby prepare the way.

John’s choice of location may seem odd. You might think he would go to the city where there is a larger population and yet he appeared in the wilderness. The wilderness may sound scary to us today but in the time of John, the wilderness was an uplifting place of the spirit and strengthening of religious life. In the wilderness, John drew them to confession and to baptism. His message was inspiring yet he always realized “*the one who is more powerful than I is*

coming after me.” The announcement of that coming one had a power that overcame many obstacles, that drew people out of their comfort zones into a new place, and that created a movement thought impossible. Do we hear those words of comfort today? We need the comfort of these scriptures today.

Isaiah gives us good news in verse 11 *“He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms. He will “carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep. He will “carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.”* The God announced by Isaiah is both powerful and gentle, able to comfort as well as defend. This God is a shepherd.

Usually this time of year the Sunday school is preparing their pageant and the worship team is preparing to highlight the Bethlehem nativity story also. Mark doesn’t think it’s a necessary story to know who Jesus is. Because we are not having the traditional story this year, Mark can remind us that God uses many people like John, to pave the way to bring Jesus into our minds and hearts. The grass, the field and the flowers will bloom again.

In these texts, we hear and see the value of those who pave the way – the way to Jesus and the way to liberation in this present life. This is the gospel of comfort and joy according to Isaiah and Mark. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

God of power and might, comfort your people and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need. ***A brief silence.*** Faithful God, you teach us to wait for you with faithfulness and patience. Sustain and support us in our doubts and questions. Nurture our faith as we discern and enact your mission. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Leading God, you ask us to make uneven ground smooth. Make even the disparities between your people. Sustain and support people with physical and intellectual disabilities. Accompany disability advocates who work for a world accessible to all. Teach us to celebrate the great diversity in our midst. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Tender God, you know sorrow and joy alike. We pray for those in our families and congregation who are not joyful in this holiday season. Comfort those who grieve, be a companion to all who are lonely, tend those who are sick or struggling with depression, and gather all people in your healing embrace. Be with all in need of healing especially **Karla Gipe and Brad Shippert. We pray for the families suffering with the coronavirus and we pray for an end to the virus with safe vaccinations and treatments. We pray for those in care facilities: Sibyl, Barb, Tammy, Trudy, Jessica, Hazel, Jeanne and Linda. We pray for those in military service: Logan, JJ, Bryan, Dustin, Brad and Travis).**

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Eternal God, we give thanks for the saints who have prepared your way in the wilderness and taught us to continue their faithful work. Make their generous lives an example for all.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

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

Prayer of Offering

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 power of the Holy Spirit we pray as Jesus taught the disciples...

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.

Invitation to Communion

Even as we watch and wait, Christ is here. Come, eat and drink.

Holy Communion Together

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Take your bread/wafer

The body of Christ given for you

Take you juice/wine

The blood of Christ shed for you

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace.

Prayer after Communion

Gracious and abundant God, you have done great things for us, and we rejoice.
In this bread and cup you give us life forever. In your boundless mercy, strengthen us
and open our hearts to the world's needs, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love,
the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, ☩ now and forever. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Thank you for your offerings

Stay in touch if you or someone you know needs help and or prayer.