

**SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**DECEMBER 6, 2020**

**INTRODUCTION**

*John calls people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord's coming. The reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.*

**PRELUDE**

**GATHERING**

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*God calls us together in worship*

**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.**

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**

*Reader One:* Isaiah the Prophet reassured the people, God is sending words of comfort to you, speaking tenderly to you. God promises that your hard labor is over, your sentence has been served and your penalty has been paid. You are forgiven not once but double all that is needed.

*Reader Two:* Go up to a high mountain, and call out the good news! Lift your voices up with strength and call out the good news! Do not be afraid! Your God is coming.

*Reader One:* Our God is mighty, but our God is also gentle. God loves the flock and will feed it just the way a shepherd would, holding us close like lambs and guiding us, old and young.

*Reader Two:* We wait for God's peace and live in God's hope as we light these candles.

*(Please pause as we light two candles, then respond.)*

**All: Loving God, come and shine your light in the world!**

### **GATHERING HYMN: *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus***

- 1 Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of ev'ry nation, joy of ev'ry longing heart.*
- 2 Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king;  
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.*

### **GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

### **KYRIE**

*Lord, have mercy: Lord, have mercy.*

*Christ, have mercy: Christ, have mercy.*

*Lord, have mercy: Lord, have mercy.*

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray. **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.**

## **WORD**

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*God speaks to us in scripture, reading, preaching, and song*

### **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.*

<sup>1</sup>Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

<sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand forever.

<sup>9</sup>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!”

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

<sup>11</sup>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.

**Word of God. Word of Life. Thanks be to God.**

## **Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13**

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

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

<sup>8</sup>I 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.

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

<sup>10</sup>Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;  
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

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

<sup>12</sup>The LORD will indeed grant prosperity,  
and our land will yield its increase.

<sup>13</sup>**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.*

<sup>8</sup>Do 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. <sup>9</sup>The 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. <sup>10</sup>But 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.

<sup>11</sup>Since 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, <sup>12</sup>waiting 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? <sup>13</sup>But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be

found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; <sup>15a</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

### **GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-8**

*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.*

The holy gospel according to Mark, the first chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

<sup>2</sup>As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; <sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’ ”

<sup>4</sup>John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And 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. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>He 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. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

#### **HYMN OF THE DAY: *O Little Town of Bethlehem***

- 1 O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;  
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*
- 2 For Christ is born of Mary, and, gathered all above  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wond'ring love.  
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!*

### **APOSTLES' CREED**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.\* On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

*Each petition will end with:*

*"Hear us, O God,"*

*You may respond with: "Your mercy is great."*

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.**

Loving God, you set the stars in the sky and breathe life into the earth. Renew the face of creation where it is in need of your healing touch. Mend the wounds of environmental damage and restore balance to ecosystems so that all creation can declare your praise. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Steadfast God, you never tire of seeking justice. Where people suffer from discrimination, judgment, and injustice, speak words of truth and comfort. Lead us toward a world where faithfulness will sprout underfoot and righteousness rain down from above. 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.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Eternal God, we give thanks for the saints who have prepared your way in the wilderness and taught us to continue their faithful work especially Nicholas of Myra. 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.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

## **SENDING**

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*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

## **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.**

## **SENDING SONG: *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing***

*1 Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king;*

*peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."*

*Joyful, all you nations, rise; join the triumph of the skies;*

*with angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"*

*Refrain: Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"*

*2 Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,*

*late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.*

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see! Hail, incarnate deity!*

*Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel! Refrain*

## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**