**A Service of The Word and Sacrament**

**The Second Sunday of Advent**

**December 8, 2024**

As we light the Advent candles, only one thing is still needed. Please, O God, the joy! Each Christmas season, joy suddenly arrives, a fresh miracle. Powerful enough to transform even preachers and professors into delighted children. Sometimes joy creeps into a prison cell, or a lonely room where someone tries to glue together the shreds of a smashed-up life. Despite ancient and honored tradition, I think maybe Advent is supposed to last all year.

K Kuperstock

**RINGING OF THE BELL**

**THE PRELUDE** **Angels We Have Heard On High** (Piano Duet) - Helen and Joan

**WELCOME AND GREETING**

Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.

**Praise be to God!**

**CHORAL GATHERING “O Little Town of Bethlehem”**

**O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see you lie!**

**Above your deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by;**

**Yet in your dark streets shines forth the everlasting light,**

**The hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight.**

 **For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,**

**While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.**

**O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!**

**And praises sing, and voices ring with peace to all on earth.**

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH – THEME “PEACE”**

**Readers: Jeremiah & Kathy Rehrauer**

**Reader One:** The prophet Malachi calls us to watch for the messenger God will send us, a messenger who burns with a passion for God’s coming salvation. “For he is like a refiner’s fire and like washers’ soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness.”

**In a world driven by a passion to maintain the status quo, we choose to live with a passion for God’s peace, to listen to those who call us to righteousness, and to submit ourselves to God’s grace, that we might be refined and purified until we reflect God’s love throughout the earth.**

**Reader Two:** We light this candle of peace as a sign of our commitment to passionately pursue the work of making peace in our hearts, our families, our communities, and throughout the earth until God’s kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven.

**Light the first Advent Candle: Hope.**

**Light the second Advent Candle: Peace.**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Lord who was born in Bethlehem.

Children of God, prepare the way! The Word of God is coming!

**We come to listen. We come to pray. We come to receive God’s Word among us.**

Children of God, the prophets call to us from generations past, urging us to refine our hearts for the coming of the Word of God.

**We come to listen. We come to pray. We come to receive God’s Word among us.**

Children of God, let God’s Word burn within us. With awe, behold what God has wrought through Christ our Lord.

**Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. We wait. We hope. We yearn. Come, bring hope to folk like us who sometimes give up hoping. Come, be light to folk like us who often walk in darkness. Come, speak a powerful word into our deadly silence. Come, Lord Jesus. We yearn for you, even when we don’t know it is for you whom we are yearning. Amen.**

**\*HYMN “Now Bless the God of Israel” #110**

**\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

How can we stand before God when we know all is not right among us?

How can we claim the promises of God when we break promises at will?

Out of the poverty of our lives, I invite you to come with me before our merciful God.

**O God, we are a fragile people. We have regretful memories of the past. We have said things that have left scars upon others. We have wasted the precious gift of time. We have been hard-hearted. O God, we need to be transformed. We need to know that our lives have not been lived in vain. We pray, O God, for the healing of our shame. And we pray, O God, that the grace of your forgiveness might cleanse us of all that is unsightly. In the name of Jesus, we trust you for our salvation. Amen.**

**\*ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

People of faith, you are loved with an infinite amount of love. You are treasured by God more than you can imagine. Because of the cross of Jesus Christ, you can trust that at this very moment you are being whole. Amen.

\***RESPONSE “O Little Town of Bethlehem” #133, vss. 3-4**

**LUKE 1:68-79 (Responsively) Reader: Carson Thiel**

(Typically, the church prays the words of a psalm in our worship of God. Today, we pray the words that Zechariah spoke at the occasion of the birth of his son, John.)

‘Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

**He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David,**

as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

**that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.**

Thus, he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant,

**the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us**

that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

**And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,**

to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.

**By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,**

to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.’

**THE OLD TESTAMENT Isaiah 40:1-11 Reader: Carson Thiel**

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.

A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 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. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’

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. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever. 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!’

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

**BELLS and CHIMES CHOIR** **O Come O Come Emmanuel**

**SERMON ON THE STEPS “Are you ready for Christmas?”**

**THE GOSPEL Luke 3:1-6 Reader: Carson Thiel**

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”’

**SERMON “Prepare the Way of the Lord”**

**INGATHERING OF PRAYER CONCERNS**

**PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD’S PRAYER** (St. John’s: *debts/debtors;* St. Paul’s: sins/sin against 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 (*debts*/sins), as we forgive (*our debtors*/those who sin 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. Amen.**

**THE OFFERING**

Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in your midst.’ God increases love in our hearts for the sake of our church, our community, and our world. Through our gifts, we grow in faith and strengthen our relationships.

**\*RESPONSE “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow” #780**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below;**

**Praise God above, you heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

**\*OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Joyous God, Originator of all Gifts,

**This day and always, we celebrate the gifts you have bestowed upon us. We share our gifts, trusting that our resources will aid in the building of your kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven. Amen.**

**SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION**

The Gospel tells us that on the first day of the week our Lord was raised from death, and that evening while at table with two disciples He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

**This is the joyful feast of the people of God. Come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and gather about Christ’s table.**

This table is for all Christians who wish to knowthe presence of Christ and to share in the community of God’s people. God be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to God.**

Let us give thanks to God Most High.

**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

We give You thanks, God of majesty and mercy, for calling forth the creation and raising us from dust by the breath of Your being. We bless You for the bounty of the earth and for the vision of the day when sharing by all will mean scarcity for none. We rejoice that You call the entire human family to this table.

We come in celebration of the gift of Jesus Christ, whom You sent in the fullness of time to be the good news. Born of Mary, Christ lived among us to reveal the mystery of Your Word, to suffer and die on the cross for us, to be raised from death and then to live in glory. We bless You, gracious God, for the presence of Your Holy Spirit in the church. We praise You with joy.

**Holy, Holy, Holy God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God most high. Blessed is He who comes in the name of our God.**

We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus gathered the disciples for the feast of Passover. Jesus took bread, gave thanks to You, broke it, and then offered it to the disciples, saying: “This is My body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way he took the cup, saying: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” Therefore, we proclaim the mystery of our faith.

**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

We spread Your table, O Lord, with these gifts. We present to You our lives, committed to Your service. Send Your Holy Spirit on this bread, this cup, and us. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND POURING OF THE CUP**

**SHARING OF THE ELEMENTS**

**\*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

**\*HYMN “All Earth Is Waiting” #121**

**\*ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**\*COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION**

**\*POSTLUDE**