

Sunday, December 10, 2017
Second Sunday of Advent

INTRODUCTION

John called people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing would get 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

"Comfort, Comfort Ye My People"

Raymond Haan

*LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

P *We praise you, O God, for this evergreen crown that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent.*

C **As we light the candles on this wreath, kindle within us the fire of your Spirit, that we may be light shining in the darkness. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may welcome others as you have welcomed us. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. Amen!**

*WELCOMING SONG

"He Came Down" vs. 2, 3

ELW 253

**He came down that we may have light;
he came down that we may have light;
he came down that we may have light;
hallelujah forevermore.**

**He came down that we may have peace;
he came down that we may have peace;
he came down that we may have peace;
hallelujah forevermore.**

*GATHERING SONG

"All Earth is Hopeful"

ELW 266

**All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!
Furrows lie open for God's creative task:
this, the labor of people who struggle to see
how God's truth and justice set ev'rybody free.**

**People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel";
she conceived him, "God with us,"
our brother, whose birth
restores hope and courage to children of this earth.**

**Mountains and valleys will have to be prepared;
new highways opened, new protocols declared.
Almost here! God is nearing, in beauty and grace!
All clear ev'ry gateway, in haste, come out in haste!**

**We first saw Jesus a baby in a crib.
This same Lord Jesus today has come to live
in our world; he his present, in neighbors we see
our Jesus is with us, and ever sets us free.**

***GREETING**

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

G **And also with you.**

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

“Prepare the Way of the Lord”

Mark Hayes

Karen Jensen, soprano

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P *Stir up our hearts, Lord God,*

G **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!**

ANTHEM

“Awaken and Prepare Us”

Frombach/Hayes

Chancel Choir

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. The Lord will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for his sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of the Lord.

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.

Reflection

This text comes from the time when the people of Judah are in exile in Babylon, Jerusalem and the Temple has been destroyed, and the people wonder whether they will ever be able to return home. What is the comfort that the prophet gives to the people? (verses 1-2) The prophet talks about a highway. Who is the highway for? (verse 3) What kind of highway is it? (No calls to the newspaper about how impassable this highway is!) (verse 4) Why will God be coming to Babylon, do you think? (see verses 9-10, where the herald sees who is coming) How can the people know for sure that this will happen? (verses 6-8) The text speaks of the arm of the Lord God. When you think of God's arm, what do you think of? (I think of the poster of Rosie the Riveter, who flexes her arm to show she has the strength to do the job.) Besides power, what does the prophet suggest the arm of the Lord God will do? (verse 11) How does thinking of both God's might and God's compassion comfort you in this Advent?

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

¹You have been gracious to your | land, O LORD;
you have restored the good for- | tune 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 be- | fore the LORD
and shall prepare for | God a pathway.**

Reflection

The psalmist reminds God of God's favorable actions to the land and God's loving forgiveness. Why is that remembrance important at the time the psalmist is writing? (read verses 3-7) Even though they have experienced God's anger, what can the people expect to hear from God? (verses 8-9) Note that these are not some "it doesn't really matter" words. What do you think it means to "fear" God? (verse 9) What will happen when the people seek God's salvation? (verses 10-13) What will we receive from God? How do you know this? How does expecting that both righteousness and peace will come to us from God comfort you this Advent?

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.

Reflection

The people who lived in the time that the New Testament (including this letter) was written might be surprised to know that we in the 21st century are still waiting for the coming of God's judgment. Many of them assumed that it would come in their lifetime. What does Peter say about why we are still waiting? (verses 8-9) What will happen when the "day of the Lord" comes, according to the writer of this letter? (verse 10) As a reader of the Bible who loves Revelation, I prefer John the Revelator's description of "the new heaven and the new earth." (See Revelation 21-22) What the writer of this letter and the writer of Revelation have in common is the understanding that God will make all things new. (verse 13) What does the writer of this letter know about this new heavens and new earth? Waiting does not mean neglecting. How are we to wait? (verses 14-15a) I know that the promise that in this new heavens and new earth "righteousness is at home" is a great comfort to me. What comforts you in this Advent?

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

"Sing Hallelujah"

Sing hallelujah to the Lord.

Sing hallelujah to the Lord.

Sing hallelujah, sing hallelujah.

Sing hallelujah to the Lord.

***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.

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."

Reflection

It almost sounds, from this text, as though the new heavens and new earth are on the way! Mark quotes John the baptizer, who quotes our text from Isaiah to describe the coming of the Lord. Note that here, as in Isaiah, the road is not for people to come away from this earth, but it is for God to come to earth! What do you make of the description of John the baptizer? (verses

4-6) *I wonder if he wasn't dressed the way he was in order to draw attention to his message. What was his message? (verses 7-8) What comforts you about this message? Or is it not comforting at all?*

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Kris Langdon

SERMON

"Prepare"

Rev. Roger Lenander

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Down to the River to Pray"

(video)

**As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good old way
And who shall wear the starry crown
Good Lord, show me the way!**

**O sisters, let's go down,
Let's go down, come on down
O sisters, let's go down
Down in the river to pray**

**As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good old way
And who shall wear the robe and crown
Good Lord, show me the way!**

**O brothers, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
Come on, brothers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray**

**As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good old way
And who shall wear the starry crown
Good Lord, show me the way!**

**O fathers, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O fathers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray**

**As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good old way
And who shall wear the robe and crown
Good Lord, show me the way!**

O mothers, let's go down
Let's go down; don't you want to go down?
Come on, mothers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray

As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good old way
And who shall wear the starry crown
Good Lord, show me the way!

O sinners, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O sinners, let's go down
Down in the river to pray

***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!

***PRAYER SONG**

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" vs. 5

ELW 257

O come, O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Guided by the light of Christ, let us pray for the coming dawn of joy, healing, and comfort for all God's people.

A brief silence.

We long to see your glory. Prepare our hearts for your arrival by healing divisions in your church and blessing those who work for reconciliation within it. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We pray for your creation. Bring renewal to open spaces, parks, forests, mountains, and grasslands. Restore the creatures and lands that are damaged or destroyed. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We long for your peace. Make places of welcome for people fleeing violence. For nations facing conflict or crisis, deliver relief. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We seek healing for all people who long for justice, freedom, and comfort. Sustain them in their time of need. Be with all who wait for you, who suffer in body, mind, or spirit *especially Emily, Ramona, Mary Anna, Alivia, Kay, Lin, and Linda* and for those we name before you aloud or silently in our hearts (*pause for 10 seconds*). Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We give thanks for those who are ready to help in times of crisis. Give courage to disaster and emergency response teams, police officers, nurses, doctors, surgeons, chaplains, and all who work for the sake of others. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We pray for all the men and women of our armed forces, at home and abroad. We especially lift up to you, Jason Shields. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We are your beloved flock and you are our shepherd, O God. Along with the saints already at rest in you, bring us together as your people under your holy rule. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We raise our prayers to you, O God, in the name of the one who is, who was, and who is to come, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen!

***PRAYER SONG**

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" refrain

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

P *The peace of Christ be with you always.*

C **And also with you!**

OFFERTORY

"People Look East" vv. 1 & 3

ELW 248

People, look east. The time is near
of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Guest, is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim,
one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining beyond the frosty weather,
bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Star, is on the way.

***OFFERTORY RESPONSE**

"Jesus, Name Above All Names"

Jesus, name above all names,
beautiful Savior,
glorious Lord,
Emmanuel, God is with us,
blessed Redeemer,
living Word.

***OFFERING PRAYER**

P *Savior of the nations, come.*

C **Make your home here in us. Feed us with your love, that our faith shine ever new and our lives reveal your light. Amen!**

***DIALOGUE**

P *The Lord be with you.*

C **And also with you.**

P *Lift up your hearts.*

C **We lift them to the Lord.**

P *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*

C **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

***PREFACE**

P *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. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:*

***HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

**Holy, Holy,
Holy Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full,
are full of your glory.
Hosanna! Hosanna!
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes,
who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna! Hosanna!
Hosanna in the highest.**

***THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

P *Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:
Blessed are you for the birth of creation.
Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.
Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.
Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.
Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,
the Word made flesh.
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.
Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:*

C Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

P *With this bread and cup*

*we remember your Word dwelling among us,
full of grace and truth.*

We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.

We look with hope for his coming.

C **Come, Lord Jesus.**

P *Holy God, we long for your Spirit.*

Come among us.

Bless this meal.

May your Word take flesh in us.

Awaken your people.

Fill us with your light.

Bring the gift of peace on earth.

C **Come, Holy Spirit.**

P *All praise and glory are yours,*

Holy One of Israel,

Word of God incarnate,

Power of the Most High,

one God, now and forever.

C **Amen!**

***LORD'S PRAYER**

P *Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.*

C **Our Father in heaven,**

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those

who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours,

now and forever. Amen!

***INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P *Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you. Share in the feast of salvation.*

***BLESSING**

P *The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.*

C **Amen!**

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P *God for whom we wait,*

C **you come to us in the broken bread and the cup we share. Make us ready always to welcome Christ into our hearts, and send us forth to be your people in the world, announcing your coming among us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!**

***BENEDICTION**

P *May Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path.
Almighty God, Father, ~~the~~ Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.*

C **Amen!**

***SENDING SONG**

“There Is Joy In the Lord”

**There is joy in the Lord
There is love in His Spirit
There is hope in the knowledge of Him
There's a fountain that flows
Like a river from heaven
Abounding in love to my soul**

**All blessing and honor are His
All glory and power are His
Let all wisdom and strength
Be the Lord's in this place
Let all glory be given to Him**

**There is joy in the Lord
There is love in His Spirit
There is hope in the knowledge of Him
There's a fountain I know
Ev'ry time I am near it
My heart overflows to the Lord**

**All blessing and honor are His
All glory and power are His
Let all wisdom and strength
Be the Lord's in this place
Let all glory be given to Him**

**There is joy in the Lord
There is love in His Spirit
There is hope in the knowledge of Him
There's a fountain that flows
Like a river from heaven
Abounding in love to my soul**