

Sunday, December 17, 2017
Third Sunday of Advent

INTRODUCTION

“Rejoice always,” begins the reading from First Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. “All God’s children got a robe,” go the words of the spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes that make us feel happy just to put on. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.

PRELUDE

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

arr. Mark Hayes

*LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

P *We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath that marks our days of preparation for Christ’s advent.*

C **As we light the candles on this wreath, strengthen our hearts as we await the Lord’s coming in glory. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may serve our neighbors in need. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. Amen!**

*WELCOMING SONG

“He Came Down” vs. 2, 3, 4

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.

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

*GATHERING SONG

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

ELW 289

Angels we have heard on high,
sweetly singing o’er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain

Gloria in excelsis Deo;
gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
which inspire your heav'nly song? *Refrain*

Come to Bethlehem and see
him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn king. *Refrain*

***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.**

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

"Prepare Ye"

Prepare ye, the way of the Lord,
Prepare ye, the way of the Lord.
Prepare ye, the way of the Lord,
Prepare ye, the way of the Lord.
Prepare ye, the way of the Lord,
Prepare ye, the way of the Lord.
Prepare ye, the way of the Lord.

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

☞ *Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God,*

☞ **and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen!**

ANTHEM

"When Will He Come"

Joseph Martin

Chancel Choir

First Reading

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of the Lord, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

¹The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,

and release to the prisoners;
²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.
⁸For I the LORD love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

Reflection

The prophet speaks (or the Servant). What is the work that must be done? (verses 1-3) How many "tasks" in this mission are listed? (I count seven—as does the Lutheran Bible.) What are they? What do you know about the number seven in the Bible? (Think, for example, of the seven days of creation, including the seventh day of rest, in Genesis 1.) Seven symbolizes completeness—everything will be transformed. This mission is God's mission, the work of the prophet, of the Servant of God, of Israel, and for us as followers of the Servant of God, the work of all of us. What do you think? What will be the marks that this mission is being accomplished? (verses 3-4) What ruins and devastations do you see that need to be repaired? Why are these the work of God's people? (verses 8-9) When this mission is being done, what happens to those who are called to this work? (verses 10-11) How does this text describe the longing we experience during Advent for the coming of God?

Psalm 126

¹When the LORD restored the for- | tunes of Zion,
then were we like | those who dream.

²**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with | shouts of joy.**

Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great | things for them.”

³The LORD has done great | things for us,
and we are | glad indeed.

⁴**Restore our for- | tunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses | of the Negeb.**

⁵Those who | sowed with tears
will reap with | songs of joy.

⁶**Those who go out weeping, carry- | ing the seed,
will come again with joy, shoulder- | ing their sheaves.**

Reflection

This psalm is a hymn sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, as they are approaching Jerusalem. What has God done for the people singing this psalm? (verses 1-3) What is the prayer that they pray? (verses 4-6) Note that the Negeb is the desert. Have you ever had the experience of beginning with weeping and returning with shouts of joy? What is the mood of this psalm? When would you most like to sing or pray it?

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Reflection

This text is from one of the first letters of Paul written to a church he had pastored. What does he urge the Christians there (who may have been experiencing persecution) to do? (verses 16-18) Easy to say, hard to do! It takes a lot of faith to rejoice always! What do you think it means when Paul encourages them to “pray without ceasing.” How can anyone do that? I think it means not so much to always be saying “Praise the Lord” or “Dear Jesus...” but more that we continually open our hearts to God and to one another. What do you think? How do you “test everything; hold fast to what is good”? What is the test? How do you hold fast to your faith in such trying times as these?

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

“Sing Hallelujah”

Sing hallelujah to the Lord.

Sing hallelujah to the Lord.

Sing hallelujah, sing hallelujah.

Sing hallelujah to the Lord.

Gospel

John 1:6-8, 19-28

John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

'Make straight the way of the Lord,' "

as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Reflection

We are used to reading this first chapter of John as a prose poem about Jesus the Word. The sections of this chapter that make up this Gospel reading aren't about Jesus. Who are they about? (verse 6) What is his role in this salvation story? (verses 7-8) John is asked about himself in this text. (verses 19-28) Who does John say that he is? How does John take up the mission described in our Isaiah text?

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Kris Langdon

SERMON

"Joy"

Rev. Roger Lenander

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Go Tell It on the Mountain"

ELW 290

Refrain

Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. *Refrain*

The shepherds feared and trembled
when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus

that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain*

Down in a lonely manger
the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

***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. 6

ELW 257

O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;
O Sun of justice, now draw near.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadow put to flight.
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.

Guiding Lord, bless church leaders, volunteers, teachers, musicians, acolytes, deacons, pastors, seminarians, and those discerning a call to ministry. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Creating God, protect Earth's wilderness, especially where the lands are isolated and unexplored. Watch over all living creatures who remain free from human exploitation. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Prince of Peace, send us your Spirit of unity, so that justice may spring up among the nations. Give us the will to repair the broken systems that perpetuate injustice. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Merciful God, comfort your children who are mourning, bind up the brokenhearted, and heal our wounds. We pray for those who are homeless or imprisoned, refugees, those who struggle with addiction or mental illness. Show your healing comfort and peace to *Roxanna, Mary Anna, Kay, 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.

Lord of justice, strengthen and increase the ministry of food pantries, meal service deliveries, employment training programs, and advocacy for equity among all classes and races. 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.

Eternal God, clothe us in your garments of salvation, so that together we may rejoice in your presence with the saints who have died and with those unable to be with us today. 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.*

G **And also with you!**

OFFERTORY

"I Want To Know You"

In the secret in the quiet place
In the stillness You are there
In the secret in the quiet hour
I wait only for You
'Cause I want to know You more

Refrain

I want to know You
I want to hear Your voice
I want to know You more
I want to touch You
I want to see Your face
I want to know You more

I am reaching for the highest goal
That I might receive the prize
Pressing onward
Pushing every hindrance aside
Out of my way
'Cause I want to know You more
more and more *Refrain*

I am reaching for the highest goal
That I might receive the prize
Pressing onward
Pushing every hindrance aside
Out of my way
'Cause I want to know You more
more and more *Refrain*

***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.*
G **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,
Holy, holy, holy is our God,
God, the Lord of earth and heaven.
Holy, holy is our God.
Holy, holy, holy,
Holy, holy, holy is our God,
God, the Lord of hist'ry.
Holy, holy is our God.**

***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, \dagger Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.*

C Amen!

***SENDING SONG**

“Joy to the World”

ELW 267

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her king;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sin and sorrow grow
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace
and makes the nations prove

**the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.**