

Sunday, December 24, 2017
Fourth Sunday of Advent

INTRODUCTION

God keeps the promise made to David, to give him an everlasting throne. The angel tells Mary that God will give David's throne to her son Jesus. She is perplexed by Gabriel's greeting and by the news of her coming pregnancy, but she is able still to say, "Count me in." We who know that Jesus is called king only as he is executed still find it a mystery hard to fathom, but with Mary today we hear the news of what God is up to and say, "Count us in."

PRELUDE

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Humphrey Turner

*LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

☐ *We praise you, O God, for this wheel of time that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent.*

☑ **As we light the candles on this wreath, open our eyes to see your presence in the lowly ones of this earth. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may sing of your advent among us in the Word made flesh. 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, 1

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.

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

*GATHERING SONG

"Love Has Come"

ELW 292

Love has come—a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;

hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

Love is born! Come, share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother;
what is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers;
Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

Love has come and never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas;
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

***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

“Sing of Mary, Pure and Lowly”
Chancel Choir

arr. Matthew Armstrong

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

☞ *Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come.*

☞ **With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen!**

ANTHEM

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”
Chancel Choir

arr. Craig Courtney

Deon Jensen, soprano saxophone

FIRST READING

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Instead of David building a house (temple) for the Lord, the Lord promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, the Lord's anointed.

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” ³Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you.”

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Reflection

What did David want to do when he was settled in as king? (verses 1-2) Nathan, the prophet, at first approves this project (verse 3) but then what happens? (verses 4-7) What was God’s project? (verse 8-11) Why do you think David didn’t end up building the temple he wanted? What might have happened to the house of David if he had been the builder of the temple? How do we know that we are working on God’s project? Who speaks for God in our lives?

PSALM

Luke 1:46b-55

^{46b}My soul proclaims the greatness | of the Lord,
⁴⁷my spirit rejoices in | God my Savior,
⁴⁸**for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your | lowly servant.**
From this day all generations will | call me blessed:
⁴⁹you, the Almighty, have done great | things for me
and holy | is your name.
⁵⁰**You have mercy on | those who fear you,**
from generation to | generation.
⁵¹You have shown strength | with your arm
and scattered the proud in | their conceit,
⁵²**casting down the mighty | from their thrones**
and lifting | up the lowly.
⁵³You have filled the hungry | with good things
and sent the rich | away empty.
⁵⁴**You have come to the aid of your | servant Israel,**
to remember the prom- | ise of mercy,
⁵⁵the promise made | to our forbears,
to Abraham and his chil- | dren forever.

Reflection

This psalm is Mary’s Song of Praise. The Latin for the words of the beginning of the psalm is “Magnificat,” which is sometimes what this Song of Praise is titled. As you read (or sing) this psalm, what strikes you most about it? Note that it is not a song of the praise of wealthy, well-

placed people, but of Mary, God's lowly servant. What does Mary rejoice in? (verses 46-49) This is a song of turning—the things that seem one way (the rich get richer and the poor get poorer) turn out to be turned on their head. (See verses 51-53) How is this your song during Advent? How does the coming of Jesus turn things around?

SECOND READING

Romans 16:25-27

Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

²⁵Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Reflection

What is the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but now is disclosed? (verses 25-26) Who are the recipients of the good news of this mystery? How are we blessed through this mystery?

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

"Celtic Alleluia"

ELW 174

Alleluia, alleluia.

Alleluia, alleluia.

***GOSPEL**

Luke 1:26-38

In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people (Mary) from littleknown places (Nazareth). This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in his gospel.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Reflection

Have you ever encountered an angel? (note: an angel is literally a messenger sent from God) What did the angel Gabriel say to Mary? (verse 28) What was Mary's response in her heart? (verse 29) The angel said to Mary what most angels need to say when they encounter humans: what was it? (verse 30) What was Gabriel's announcement to Mary? (verses 31-33) Mary is both self-possessed (verse 29—she didn't scream or run away), and also quite practical. What is her question? (verse 34) What does the angel Gabriel explain to Mary? (verse 35) What testimony does Gabriel offer that he is really from God? (verses 36-37) What is Mary's response? (verse 38) Mary is Luke's example of a good disciple. In what ways have you said to God, "Let me be with me according to your word"? In what ways have you found that difficult to say with all your heart? How are we able to respond with Mary's faith to what God says to us? (verse 37)

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Kris Langdon

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Mary Did You Know?"

M. Lowry/B. Greene

Kyle Kurtz, baritone

SERMON

"Promise"

Rev. Roger Lenander

HYMN OF THE DAY

"What Child Is This?"

ELW 296

What child is this, who, laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary!

Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
the cross be borne for me, for you;
hail, hail the Word made flesh,
the babe, the son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high,
the virgin sings her lullaby;

joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary!

***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. 1

ELW 257

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
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.

Your eternal reign has come into the world. Give us ears to hear your call to serve your kingdom, and send us out to those who are hurting and in need of good news. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

You created the mystery and beauty of the earth. Replenish rivers, lakes, seas, and all bodies of water, so that plants, animals, and humans can have life and be refreshed. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

You bring down the powerful and raise up the lowly. Where war rages, shatter hatred with forgiveness and peace. Where fear rules, make your all-powerful and eternal presence known. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

You remember us with mercy, Lord, as you have done for all generations. Fill us, comfort us, strengthen us, and enlighten us. Make your will known to all in need. Today we pray especially for *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.

You called Mary to bear your Son. We pray for pregnant women, for mothers and fathers of infants and small children, and especially for couples who bear the pain of infertility, miscarriage, or stillbirth. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Your kingdom has no end. With your servants throughout time, women and men, old and young, unite us forever in your reign of peace and joy. 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 SPECIAL MUSIC *“Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella”* arr. Stephen Schmidt
Stephen Schmidt, piano

***OFFERING PRAYER**

P *Savior of the nations, come.*

G **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, of your glory.
Hosanna, hosanna,
hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he 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.*

G **Amen!**

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P *God for whom we wait,*

G **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, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.*

G **Amen!**

***SENDING SONG**

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

ELW 270

**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!"**

**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*

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise each child of earth,
born to give us second birth. *Refrain*