

Service of Holy Communion

December 6, 2020 Advent 2

WELCOME

PRELUDE

"Waiting Here for You" Tomlin/Reeves/Smith

One Voice

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

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.

GATHERING SONG *"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.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

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.

LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

As the candle is lighted, this prayer is said.

We praise you, O God, for this circle of light that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, kindle us with 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.



Holden Evening Prayer - The Magnificat

Marty Haugen

1. My soul pro-claims your great-ness, O God, and my spir - it re-joic - es in
 2. You have cast the might - y down from their thrones, and up - lift - ed the hum-ble of

you, You have looked with love on your ser - vant here, and blessed me all my life
 heart, You have filled the hun - gry with wondrous things, and left the wealth-y no

through. Great and might-y are you, O Ho - ly One, strong is your kind-ness
 part. Great and might-y are you, O Faith-ful One, strong is your jus - tice,

ev - er - more. How you fa - vor the weak and low-ly one, hum-bling the proud of heart
 stong your love, As you prom-ised to Sar-ah and A-bra-ham, kind-ness for - ev - er more.

My soul pro-claims your great-ness, O God, and my spir - it re-joic - es in

you, You have looked with love on your ser - vant here, and

blessed me all my life through, and blessed me all my life through

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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.**

THE WORD

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.

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.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: *Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13*

¹You have been gracious to your land, O LORD; you have restored the good fortune 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.

**⁹Truly, 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.

**¹¹Faithfulness 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.

**¹³Righteousness 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.

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.

The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Setting 1

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. *Repeat alleluia*

GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-8

The Holy Gospel according to Mark, the first chapter

Glory to you, O Lord.

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.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

I don't know about you, but what's helped me get through these last 8 months of constant sameness is stories. Can't go anywhere for vacation, can't gather with friends or the larger family, so I take trips and explore interesting relationships through stories – stories on Netflix, like *The Crown*; or in books – like the entire *Lonesome Dove* series by Larry McMurtry. Stories are more than entertainment. They help us see the world in

a broader light; they help us understand ourselves and others; they give us the chance to imagine what we might do if we were in the same situation as the characters in the story. Stories connect us to people and places across the world and throughout the ages.

For the next few weeks, then, I'm going to focus on stories.

Today is the second Sunday in Advent and we are preparing for the coming of the Savior. In the gospel reading, John the Baptist went before Jesus, to get people ready for his arrival, so they wouldn't miss him when he came into their lives. "Prepare the way of the Lord," the reading says, "make his paths straight."

Imagine living in a world without motor vehicles and paved roads. Travel was mostly by foot or donkey, maybe a horse if you were wealthy, and you might have had a wagon. The roads were rough – pathways, really, or gravel drives with those crushed rocks and the dust they kick up. A hard rain would reduce them to a slip-sliding, sinking-in-the-muck mess. In our world, we don't need highways to be made straight for travel to be easy. But on a cart being pulled by a mule, or walking in sandals, a straight, smooth road would be really helpful. Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.

In Advent, especially the first two Sundays, we prepare, not only for Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, but for his coming at the end of days to set things right and rule the world with justice and mercy. The preparation, then, is on-going, throughout our lives, as we strive to know Jesus and trust him more, as we pray for God's Spirit to work in us and make us like Jesus, especially for our neighbor's sake.

This year, the second Sunday in Advent has fallen on the Feast Day of Saint Nicholas, better known in our culture as Santa Claus. Before he was depicted as a jolly, chubby fellow with a long white beard in a red suit, St. Nicholas was a real person – who loved Jesus in his heart and in his living, and who was a bishop in the Church.

St. Nicholas was born in the third century in a village called Patara, which was then part of Greece and is now part of Turkey. His wealthy parents raised him as a devout Christian. When they died – during an epidemic – Nicholas decided to follow Jesus' command to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor." He used his entire inheritance to help the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his whole life to serving God, and was made bishop of Myra as a young man.

Over the years, various stories arose about Nicholas's generosity and concern for children and the poor. These stories, based in fact but perhaps embellished a bit, portray how St. Nick or Father Christmas lived his life preparing the way for the Lord.

One well-known story goes like this... In the town where Nicholas lived, there was a poor man with three daughters. The man loved his daughters, and raised them as best he could with his limited resources. When the first daughter came of age, the man was overtaken with grief. He wanted his daughter to marry well, so she could have the security of a home and the comfort of a family. But because he had no money for her dowry, he feared she would end up on the streets someday.

Nicholas was walking home in the evening when he heard a man crying and calling out. He drew near to the man's house to see what was the matter. Crouching

under an open window, Nicolas heard the man say, “Help me, Lord! I have no dowry for my daughter. No one will marry her, and when I’m gone she’ll be on the streets.” Nicolas hurried home, got out a bag of gold coins and snuck back to the poor man’s house. The man was still lamenting his situation. Nicolas flung the bag of gold through the open window and it landed in a sock hanging by the fire to dry. Then Nicolas hurried away before he could be seen or thanked, as the astonished father took out the bag and found enough gold for a good dowry. His daughter would be married!

A few years later, Nicolas happened by the poor man’s house and again heard him crying because his second daughter had come of age and he had no dowry for her. Nicolas hurried home, returned with a bag of gold, and threw it into the man’s house through an open window. It was enough money for the man’s second daughter to be married and have a good life. And the same happened one more time, when the poor man’s youngest daughter came of age. Another bag of gold was tossed in the man’s window; all three of his daughters were married, which meant they would have homes and families.

Other stories tell of St. Nicholas providing for people during famine, sparing the lives of the innocent accused, and more. He did countless kind and generous things secretly, and became known as the friend and protector of all those in trouble. St. Nicholas spent his life preparing the way for Jesus.

When you know that a ruler – whose way is one of truth and loving-kindness, of justice and mercy, of healing and gathering all as sisters and brothers – when you know this ruler is coming, that it’s just a matter of time... you can live as though that way of life, that form of governance, that shape of society was already established. That is what St. Nicholas did.

Picture John, out in the wilderness dressed in camels-hair and a crude belt, eating locusts and wild honey. Do you think his mother and father worried about his behavior, that they wanted to say, “John, get a haircut, wear some nice slacks and a shirt, and stop shouting at everyone to repent”? They might have – or if not them, then other people in the area. Maybe Saint Nicholas had friends who advised him not to give away his entire inheritance; even giving half would be amazingly generous.

But John kept right on calling people to repent, to leave their old ways behind and get ready for what was coming – the Son of God in human flesh. Nicolas didn’t listen to his friends, either; he listened to Jesus and gave everything away, as though he knew a different form of life, a different way of being, was just around the corner.

We know, also, that a new dawning, a new realm and new way of living is almost here. It is time, now, to prepare the way of the Lord. His kingdom is coming soon – a joyful kingdom of wholeness and life, of companionship and harmony, of giving and receiving and growing together, of plenty for all and love for all. Get ready. The time is at hand. Jesus will be here soon.

HYMN OF THE DAY *“Messiah”*

Verse 1

Someone's shouting from the desert
Someone's shouting from the sea
Someone's shouting from the mountain
Someone's shouting from the valley

Chorus

Messiah

Come and be our King

Messiah

Come and be our King

Verse 2

Someone's shouting from the city
I am young I am cold
Someone's shouting from the country
I am lonely I am old

Chorus

Verse 3

Someone's shouting I am broken
Someone's shouting make me whole
Someone's shouting come and change me
Someone's shouting save my soul

Chorus

Ending

Messiah, come and be our King

CCLI Song # 1454269

Larry Olson

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THE NICENE CREED

With the whole Church let us confess our faith.

We believe in one God,

**the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

**the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven**

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

**who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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. We pray especially for our nation, its leaders, for protestors and for police and civil servants. 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. Level 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.**

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.**

Hear the concerns and thanks of this worshipping community...

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.

The Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

THE DOXOLOGY – to O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
 praise him, all creatures here below;
 praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
 praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
 Rejoice! Rejoice!
 Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel

OFFERING PRAYER

Generous God, you have created all that is, and you provide for us in every season.
 Bless all that we offer, that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing.
 In the name of Jesus, Emmanuel, we pray.

Amen.

(Please have the bread and wine/juice ready for Holy Communion)

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE FOR SUNDAYS IN ADVENT

It is indeed right, our du - ty and our joy,
 that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you,
 al - mighty and merciful God, through our Sav - ior Je - sus Christ.
 You comforted your people with the promise of the Re - deem - er,
 through whom you will also make all things new
 in the day when he comes to judge the world in righ - teous-ness.
 And so, with all the choirs of an - gels,
 with the church on earth and the hosts of heav - en,
 we praise your name and join their un - end - ing hymn:

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"Holy, Holy, Holy"

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of
 pow-er and might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
 san - na in the high-est. Blessed is he who comes in the
 name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

God who, in the beginning, made order out of chaos bringing forth creation; who blessed Abraham and Sarah with a child, who led Israel from slavery into freedom, who through the prophets foretold the coming of a suffering servant, and who made Mary mother of a Son to be called Emmanuel – God, most high, who has redeemed us through Jesus Christ, our Lord – we remember...

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 in remembrance of me.

LORD'S PRAYER

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

**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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Even as we watch and wait, Christ is here. Come, eat and drink.

Take the bread and eat, this is the body of Christ, given for you. (*please consume the bread*)

Take the cup and drink, this is the blood of Christ, shed for you. (*please drink from the cup*)

BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION

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

Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Gracious and abundant God, you have done great things for us, and we rejoice. In this bread and cup you give us life forever. In your boundless mercy, strengthen us and open our hearts to the world's needs, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

It is Advent. We've got Advent resources for your family or yourself – an Advent booklet and a church luminary with a candle. Come by and pick up one for your home.

Julia Colvin has painted a lovely, big Christmas card for us and everyone is invited and encouraged to sign it. The card is in the office area until Christmas – you can sign it there. At Christmas, we will share the message that everyone has written on the card.

Don Irwin, Steinway artist, will be with us in two weeks, on the 4th Sunday in Advent, December 20. We will go live earlier on the 20th, at 9:45 so you can enjoy his prelude. There are lots of people out there who love Don's music, so spread the word. People can join us live at 9:45 am on the 20th, or go to our Facebook page and view the service later.

In-person worship has been cancelled through the end of 2020. That means our Christmas Eve worship will be virtual. The service will be live at 4pm on Christmas Eve, December 24, and then posted on our Facebook page for those who prefer to watch later.

The Sunday after Christmas, December 27, we will be worshipping with Zion Lutheran Church here in San Antonio. A link to their service will be sent out beforehand and also posted on both our website and our Facebook page.

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.

CLOSING HYMN *“Jesus Messiah”*

Verse 1

He became sin who knew no sin
That we might become His righteousness
He humbled Himself and carried the cross
Love so amazing love so amazing

Chorus

Jesus Messiah Name above all names
Blessed Redeemer Emmanuel
The Rescue for sinners
The Ransom from heaven
Jesus Messiah Lord of all

Verse 2

His body the bread His blood the wine
Broken and poured out all for love
The whole earth trembled and the veil was torn
Love so amazing love so amazing

Chorus

Bridge

All our hope is in You
All our hope is in You
All the glory to You God
The Light of the world

Chorus

Ending

Jesus Messiah
Lord of all
The Lord of all
The Lord of all

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DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

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