



Saint James Lutheran Church



A Parish of the North Carolina Synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

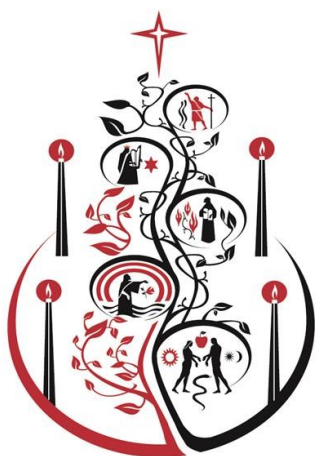


“Growing in Christ Through Worship, Learning, Fellowship, and Service”

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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT DECEMBER 13, 2020



“Rejoice always,” begins the reading from 1 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 a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.

WELCOME

CHORAL PRELUDE

Earth Was Waiting

Earth was waiting, spent and restless, with a mingled hope and fear; And the faithful few were sighing: “Surely Lord, the day is near. The Desire of all the nations, It is time He should appear. It is time He should appear.”

Then the Spirit of the Highest on a virgin meek came down; and He burdened her with blessing, And He pained her with renown. For she

bore the Lord’s anointed, For His cross and for His crown. For His cross and for His crown.

Earth for Him had groaned and waited since the ages first began; For in Him was hid the secret that thro’ all the ages ran— Son of Mary, Son of David, Son of God and Son of Man. Son of God and Son of man. Son of God and Son of Man.

LIGHTING ADVENT WREATH

~ *Beth and Hunter Huss*

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

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father, and of the ✚ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence is held for reflection and self-examination

Most merciful God,

We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

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.

WORD

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 God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

A reading from Isaiah, the sixty-first chapter.

The 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.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: *Psalm 126*

A reading from Psalm One hundred twenty six.

¹When the LORD restored the fortunes 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 fortunes, 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, carrying the seed,
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.**

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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.

A reading from 1 Thessalonians, the fifth chapter.

Rejoice 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.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

HOLY 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.

The Holy Gospel according to Saint John, the first chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

There 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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN

On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry

- 1 On Jordan's banks the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings!
- 2 Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin;
make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there.
- 3 We hail you as our Savior, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without your grace we waste away
like flow'rs that wither and decay.
- 4 Stretch forth your hand, our health restore,
and make us rise to fall no more;
oh, let your face upon us shine
and fill the world with love divine.
- 5 All praise to you, eternal Son,
whose advent has our freedom won,
whom with the Father we adore,
and Holy Spirit, evermore.



APOSTLES' CREED

God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we profess our faith.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary,

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again 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.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God of power and might, shine your radiance and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

You have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming good news. Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people who contribute their prayers and talents to public worship. Embed your word in their hearts. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You announce the year of your favor for all of creation. Extend your kindness and relief to endangered animals and plants. Strengthen the human beings who rely on the rhythms of nature to make their living. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You plant us as your oaks of righteousness and ask us to care for one another. Be present with the leaders of every nation as they govern. Give them a spirit of righteousness, that your goodness and mercy is revealed through their actions. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You repair what was once destroyed. We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm. Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You clothe us with strength when our spirits are weak and weary. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. Make your church a place of refuge and healing. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You offer joy even in the midst of our grief. We are grateful for the beloved, imperfect people whose lives testified to your radiant love. Anoint all who mourn with the oil of gladness. 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.

LORD'S PRAYER

And now as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold 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.

BLESSING

As we await the coming of Christ, Almighty God, Father, ✚ Son, and Holy Spirit, grant you peace and joy, hope and gladness.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, remember the poor!

Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

Reprise on "Even So Lord Jesus Quickly Come"

Paul Manz

The Liturgy Has Ended; The Service Begins!

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WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please e-mail all information to the church office at keith@sjnc.net

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PRAYER LIST

Ray Faggart in Hospice care at St. Andrews
All health care professionals and first responders including:
Deb Bradshaw
Lauri Fowler
DeeDee Gilbert
Annette Propst
Meagan Lambert
Alison Monk
Jason and Stephanie Matthews
Dr Bradley Propst, son of *Kenny and Annette Propst*
Sam Hurley, son of *Elizabeth Hurley*
Julie Greathouse, friend of *Lois Marlow*
Betsy Waselovich, sister of *Golda Jay*
Lauren, daughter of *Angie Buchanan*
Dr. Stephanie Garrison, daughter-in-law of Margaret Garrison
Dr. Kevin Burns, son-in-law of Margaret Garrison.

If you have someone you would like to add to the prayer list, please contact Keith. 704-786-0166 and leave a message or email at keith@sjnc.net

BIRTHDAYS THIS WEEK

- 13-Dec. Debbie Davis
- 15-Dec. Kelley Carpenter
- 16-Dec. Don Fowler
- 16-Dec. William Irvin
- 16-Dec. Justin Urso
- 18-Dec. Judy McAnulty
- 19-Dec. Jakob Craver
- 19-Dec. Heather Hughes

ASSISTING IN WORSHIP

Lector/Intercessor:

Juanita Fitts

Vocalist:

Choir Ensemble

OUR STEWARDSHIP

Contributions and Receipts for December 6, 2020

\$14,167.00

(\$8,414.00 needed for weekly)

CUDDLE UP COAT DRIVE

The Cabarrus Partnership for Children kicked off its 14th annual Cuddle Up Coat Drive on October 1st. This winter, more than ever, we need your help to ensure all of our community's children are warm. In an effort to keep our families, children, and staff safe, we will not be accepting coats, socks, underwear, mittens or hats this year. Instead we are asking for checks (written to St. James Lutheran Church, note Coat Drive in the memo line), so that the Partnership staff can purchase the coats and winter items that local children need.

ONLINE GIVING

Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions or make a one time contribution and view your complete online giving history from anywhere you have access to the Internet. In a few short minutes, you can make a one-time gift or set up a donation that will process automatically on a recurring basis. Recurring donations are convenient and provide our church with much needed consistent support throughout the year.



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The Rev. Dr. Timothy M. Smith.....Bishop

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OFFICE HOURS

M-Th 8:30-4:00, F 8:30-1:00
Closed for lunch 12:30 - 1:00

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