

Worship Plan for Sunday, December 20, 2020

4 Advent

Fourth Sunday of Advent

ELW Holy Communion Setting Four

Sunday, December 20, 2020

Introduction to the day

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."

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

GREETING

Welcome to worship today, we are glad to have you with our Faith Lutheran Church community. I'm Pr. John Barton and I will be leading our service today.

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it! Praise Christ, no cloudy day, no isolation, no fear can darken the light which Jesus shines in our lives!

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Monday: Worship and Music 9:30am at the church Christmas Eve Prep

Tuesday:

Wednesday: Finance 1pm zoom

Thursday: Christmas Eve Parking Lot Service. Gather at 3pm, starts at 3:30. All are welcome as we worship together in our cars

Friday: Merry Christmas

Other:

For more information and a complete monthly calendar, contact the church office. Thank you!

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God 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.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

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.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING:

A reading from 2 Samuel.

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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING:

A reading from Romans.

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. Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDRENS CHAT

GOSPEL:

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Luke 1: 26-38, 46-55

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, **27** to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."^[a] **29** But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. **30** The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. **32** He 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. **33** He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" **35** The 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. **36** And 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. **37** For nothing will be impossible with God.”

38 Then 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.

46And Mary said:

My soul proclaims the greatness | of the Lord,

47my spirit rejoices in | God my Savior,

48for 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.

50You 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,

52casting 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 promise of mercy,

55 the promise made | to our forbears,

to Abraham and his children forever.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ

I was thinking last week as I recorded the service, just how odd it was to be recording an Advent sermon and not preaching it in front of all of you. I just wanted to make sure you all know how strange it was for me too, with Advent usually being a change from the time after Pentecost. And yet of the format of recorded service has continued through the change in season has remained constant, which resonated and struck me in those moments. We of course make the best of what we have and have been using this format to keep each other safe, but it does make you think about what else we would be doing during this time if there wasn't a pandemic. This time of year is usually marked by festive gatherings and caroling and

coming into our sanctuaries together to light our Advent wreaths. Even as we remember wherever we worship our God is appropriate in God's eyes, it still can be easy to only focus on the things we don't have this year, even on the fact that we don't even have as much light in during winter.

To expand on that fact, tomorrow is the winter solstice, the longest night of the year. It can feel like this whole year was a long night, full of darkness. However, darkness is not always a bad thing. For example, though tomorrow will have the longest night, the longest period of darkness of any 24 hour period this year, it will also be host to quite a unique light. For the first time in almost 800 years, the planets of Jupiter and Saturn will converge and align in the sky, creating a bright point of light, like a star, in the sky. Scientifically speaking, it is not a star of course and the planets will not collide or anything like that. However, our solar system's largest gas giant planets will be so close in **our** view in the sky that their combined reflections of the sun will create the most spectacular star-like light in the sky that night.

Now, theologically speaking, I believe God is giving us a strong message. The night is dark but darkness is not alone at night, there is also light. In our Gospel Christmas stories, we hear that the Wisemen or Magi

and shepherds alike were guided by a bright star in the sky. Whether you want to call it an omen or a sign or something else, we can believe that God is speaking to you and to me and everyone- telling us that things are changing. There is inherent divine messaging of hope in everything which the light of God touches, if we but open our eyes to see it. God's message to us might not be as explicit as an angel appearing before our eyes as Gabriel did for Mary, but the fact remains that God continues to talk to us. And the timing of this astrological event is undeniably fortuitous, shining light into our lives in the midst of a global crisis, surely the God of the Cosmos is using this event to tell us something. Even on the darkest day of the year, we know that the implicit message is that it can't get any darker, that the sun is coming. After the solstice, we will see more light with each new day. This lengthening of days can be a visible reminder that the Son, the Son of God that is, is coming too. From stars in the sky to angelic proclamations and songs of a young woman, we hear and see time and again that our messiah is soon coming into the world to bring light and hope and salvation.

It can seem odd to be at peace with the mixture of light and darkness in times like the solstice, or times like the pandemic. And yet this odd peace is what God instills in us and calls us to. As Jesus would remind us towards

the end of his time on earth, “my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let your hearts not be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

One more odd thing in quite an odd year. In this year full of uncertainty, pain, and suffering, the oddity is not lost on me that we crave one more little pain. A pinch or a poke one could say, one sharp pain in our deltoid shoulder muscle. The pain of an injection of a vaccine which, when enough of us have it, will end this pandemic. One more momentary pain to give us hope, given to us through God’s gift of science, to combat the larger pain of the pandemic. We have waited for this vaccine for what seems like ages. God can work within pain and oddities and darkness, taking the unexpected we find in the world to make miraculous things happen.

We wait and hope and look for one of God’s miraculous messages within another pain, one experienced by a young woman in a little town called Bethlehem. This pain had been prophesied and announced to her, and she bravely and faithfully took that pain upon herself for the good of the world. We lift up the suffering and service of Mary, the birth pains and labor to bring the Christ child into the world. Christ, who would bring about the end of our suffering in sin, would oddly not come into this world from a celebrity or royal, but unexpectedly from a young faithful woman named Mary.

We have spent 9 months now not knowing what will happen next. What we do know is what happens next in the Gospel stories, in the life of Mary, and in the life of Jesus. Mary didn't have that advantage. And yet, with no other person around to talk to or be witness, this young woman proclaims her faith in God to lead her safely through the next 9 months of her pregnancy and then the rest of her unknown future. She hands her entire being into God's hands. Mary's praise-filled response comes on the heels of the angel Gabriel giving her the message that she would bear a child who is the Son of God. Even with Gabriel telling Mary to not be afraid, I think we can all imagine how alarming Gabriel's message would be. Thankfully, Gabriel began his conversation with another message, one which we can all take hope in. Gabriel said: "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." The Lord is with us, present with us in our time of distress and change, pain and darkness, constantly present and shining light on our path forward. Even with the oddities and hardships of this year making it hard to believe, God is present in our present lives. As the angel Gabriel proclaimed "nothing will be impossible with God." In an unbelievable year, with once-in-a-lifetime events such as pandemic and planetary convergences, we can at least believe that God is with us and Christ is coming.

Despite the darkness, isolation, and pandemic- God gives us hope, a vision of new life, an end to our current suffering and separation. We are still together, even if we are apart physically, because God is with all of us. We call on our God to guide us by starlight. We pray that we have the courage to emulate Mary's words and say in our own way: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord." As our solar system's sunlight is reflected off the plants tomorrow night, we seek to reflect the Son of God's light in our lives and in our living. As we approach the night of our Savior's birth this week, watching for God's guiding light, we continue to prepare. Today we will continue in that preparation with a prayer used in Nighttime. This particular Night Prayer comes to us from the New Zealand Prayerbook. Before the prayer itself, the New Zealand Prayerbook says that the nighttime prayer is like a: "goodnight prayer of the Church'. It rounds off the day and prepares us for a quiet night. As the psalmist wrote:

"I lie down in peace and take my rest
for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid."

Night Prayer derives its content from the wisdom of the centuries in Scripture and above all in the psalms, but also from contemporary Christian experience of God. It celebrates the awareness that each of us who tries to pray is a part of the human whole. So we are taken over the threshold from daytime, not in a mood of self-centred spirituality, but as representatives of humanity, acknowledging our creaturehood before God."

So in that mind set of togetherness with all of God's children and in the presence of our God, let us pray the New Zealand Prayer book's night prayer:

Lord,
it is night.
The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence of God.
It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done;
let it be.
The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives
rest in you.
The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us,
and all who have no peace.
The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys,
new possibilities.
Blessing, light, and glory surround us
and scatter the darkness of the long and lonely night.
In your name we pray.
Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

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.

*Or, "he descended into hell," another translation of this text in widespread use.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

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

Gracious God, all generations call you blessed. In this holy season we pray for our neighbors of other denominations and faiths (*Nearby churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues may be named*). Inspire the faith of their people. Cultivate understanding among us and strengthen us in love and service to our community. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Creator God, you scatter the proud. Everything we have belongs first to you. Bless and protect the seas, mountains, plains, forests, skies, and soils that surround us. Give us humility as we tend them. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Righteous God, you humble the powerful and lift up the lowly. We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they amplify the voices of people in need. Guide all people entrusted with leadership, to create societies in which everyone can flourish. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Compassionate God, you fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. Nourish those who lack access to adequate food and nutrition. Bless the work of advocates, community organizers, and food

pantries. Encourage others to provide for their neighbors in need. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Healing God, you pour out mercy to all who cry out to you. Surround everyone in need of healing in body, mind, or spirit with your tender presence (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Eternal God, you are faithful to the promises you made to our forebears. We give thanks for the ministry of Katharina von Bora Luther and other ancestors who organized, planned, dreamed, encouraged, and reached out as they served you. We give thanks for the bold leadership of female leaders in our own time. Inspire others with their steadfast witness. 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.

PRAYER LIST

Gloria Anderson; Nancy Blackmer; Julie Chevraux; Vicki Crow; Bob Eury; Marlin Jay; Francis Key; Iver & Lois Linge; Carol Morris; Pat Myers; Ron Neumen; Tina Peteroski & Peggy Wharton & family; Edy Rose; Dee Seel; Jan Simon; Amy Sinclair; Earlean Wagner; Mary Yturalde; the homebound; the Emergency responders; and those grieving and anticipating surgery/tests.

If you would like your name added to our prayer list, please contact the church office.

PRAYER IN PANDEMIC

Merciful God, you give us the grace that helps in time of need. Almighty God, your love never fails. Help us to receive your word with believing hearts, so that, confident in your promises, we may have hope and be lifted out of sorrow into the joy and peace of your presence.

God of health and healing, surround us with your steadfast love and lighten our burden. We especially pray for those affected by COVID-19 and those who have lost loved ones.

We also hold in prayer our healthcare providers, first responders, essential workers, and all who continue to serve so that others can maintain safety. By the power of your Spirit, free us from distress and give us a new mind and a heart made whole in the name of the risen Christ.

Amen

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERING

At this time, we remember that the giving of our offering is an authentic part of worship.

In this time of the offering, in place of passing around the offering plate, we ask that you continue to mail your offerings to the church, to drop them off during office hours, or use your bank's bill pay service. We will emphasize this time of offering as a time for us to also give thanks for God's gifts. One of those gifts is our community of Faith Lutheran Church and the gift of keeping us together through the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of our Faith family. So thank you for the phone calls to each other, for your prayers for each other, for all the ways you have been giving your gifts to God's church and one another.

Thank you so much!

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

God of mercy and grace, the eyes of all wait upon you, and you open your hand in blessing. Fill us with good things at your table, that we may come to the help of all in need, through Jesus Christ, our redeemer and Lord.

Amen.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also 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.

INSTRUCTION OF COMMUNION AT HOME

Let us pray,

Gracious God, loving all your family with a mother's tender care:

As you sent the angel to feed Elijah with heavenly bread,

be present with those who partake and share your word and sacrament.

We remember you in the celebration of the sacrament and remember that you unite us as the body of Christ whether we are together in-person or together while apart.

In your love and care, nourish and strengthen those who will receive this sacrament,

and give us all the comfort of your abiding presence

through the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

At this point in the service, for those at home, please bring bread and drink for communion, preferably wine or grape juice but it can also be water. If you have communion elements gathered, I'd invite you to share with anyone in your household, and if you do not, know that the restoration and healing found in this sacrament still reaches you wherever you are.

While worshipping during the pandemic, we will be instituting communion a bit differently. These Words of Institution bless the eucharistic elements wherever you are, trusting in the all-reaching power and grace of God to provide the complete and total sacrament to us in these extraordinary times when we come to Christ's table in our own way and our own place. Once you have your eucharistic elements of bread and drink, and after the words of institution, you may commune yourself along with anyone else in your household. In all cases, you may commune saying:

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Amen.

And so,

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;
who on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

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.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

COMMUNION

The body of Christ, given for you.
The blood of Christ, shed for you.
Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

God of abundance, with this bread of life and cup of salvation you have united us with Christ, making us one with all your people. Now send us forth in the power of your Spirit, that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world and continue forever in the risen life of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

MUSIC REMINDER

Be sure to watch our separate prelude and postlude music selections if you haven't already. Those videos can be found above and below this worship video on our website.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✝ give you peace.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.
Thanks be to God.

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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