

Sunday December 20, 2020 Advent 4

Setting 4

Prelude:

News and Announcements:

Please Pray for Those Who are Ill, in Hospital, or Requested

Special Prayers: Florence Felske, Richard Hubert, Dorian Verch, Sharon Watt, Leona Woito.

SERVICE BROADCAST ON COGECO

Cogeco Community Channel is now broadcasting Zion's services at 9:00 a.m. and 12 noon on Sunday mornings, a week later.

GLUTEN FREE COMMUNION BREAD

If you wish to receive a gluten-free host (bread) as we commune today, please let Pastor Leena know prior to this morning's celebration or ask one of our guides to share that information with her.

Important Christmas Eve Worship Information, Including How To Register For Worship On Christmas Eve

We will gather for worship on Christmas Eve, December 24 at 11:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. at Zion. Please note that these times are somewhat different from last year, mostly because we need time to clean the Church after each time we gather this year. The 11 a.m. worship will be recorded and will be available for viewing Christmas Eve on our website or on our Facebook page for people who, because of Covid restrictions, would prefer to remain at home on Christmas Eve. Joining us on-line is one way that you can still be part of our celebrations on Christmas Eve. Please remember that attendance at each of our Christmas Eve celebrations cannot exceed 100 people, which is

allowed by Public Health for our Church. Perhaps you might consider, for this year only, planning to attend at 11:00 a.m. or 7:00 p.m. as the mid-afternoon attendance tends to usually be much higher in this parish than the other times on Christmas Eve and we may not have sufficient allowable seating at 3:00 p.m.

Please register your intent to join us for worship by phoning the Parish office, anytime from Monday to Thursday, in the morning (9:00 a.m. until Noon) up until December 21, giving us the time you plan to attend on Christmas Eve, as well as the names of those who will be attending with you. Volunteers will assist Jean with the registering, and will be happy to receive your phone call.

OFFERING ENVELOPES – Please note that the offering envelopes for 2021 are ready and available to be picked up. They are located in the Parish Hall along the wall in front of the kitchen. Please ensure physical distancing when going into the hall to pick up your envelopes. As in previous years, please do not use these envelopes until 2021. Envelope numbers change from year to year, and it makes inputting donations a little harder when envelopes are not used for the current year. Thank you for your understanding.

FAREWELL TO PASTOR STEPHEN & JAN

On December 27th we will be saying farewell to Pastor Stephen and Jan. Due to Covid restrictions, we will be including our sending messages during the service. We will have a basket for cards and notes that you would like to leave for Pastor Stephen and Jan. For anyone unable to attend, you may drop off or mail your cards to the church office. Susan Dupuis

GIFTS FROM THE HEART CATALOGUE – Give a meaningful gift from the comfort of home with Canadian Lutheran World Relief’s Gifts from the Heart catalogue. Your gift to a loved one will provide meaningful, tangible items for people around the world facing hunger, poverty and the threat of COVID-19. No matter which gift you choose, the gifts you give will change lives and touch your loved ones! Visit www.clwr.org/GFTH to learn more. Catalogues can also be picked up at the registration table by the entrance.

Today’s Video Has Been Brought To You By Zion Lutheran Church’s Production Crew:

Presider: Pastor Leena Jensen
Musician: Blaine Sack
Worship Assistant/Reader: Debbie Wegner
Videorecorder: Ty Phannenhour
Projectionist: Ellen Vandersleen
Credit Researcher: Diane Hammel

Today’s Scheduled Worship Leaders

Counters: Andrew Zadow, Debbie Wegner, Richard Faught
Guides: Kevin & Jean Rutz
Sexton: Don Boldt

This Week at Zion – December 21 - 27

Monday		DEADLINE TO REGISTER FOR CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES
Tuesday	7 p.m.	Narcotics Anonymous
Wednesday		BULLETIN DEADLINE

Thursday 11 a.m., **CHRISTMAS EVE Worship Services**
3 p.m.,
7 p.m.
Friday 12 p.m. - 3 p.m. **Community Christmas Dinner**
Sunday 10 a.m. Holy Communion (*Pastor Stephen's Farewell Service*)

Office Closed Until January 4, 2021

Call to Worship:

God looks kindly on us when we are at our lowest

Rejoice in God our Saviour

God has done great things for us in times past

God will do great things for us in days to come

Rejoice in God our Saviour

Christ's mercy is upon us,

Offering hope in times of despair.

Rejoice in God our Saviour

Christ's love has made us whole

Rejoice in God our Saviour

The Spirit's power disarms our pride and prejudice

Rejoice in God our Saviour

The Spirit's power strengthens our mercy and compassion

Rejoice in God our Saviour

Even as we are filled this day,

May we go forth to nourish a world in need.

Rejoice in God our Saviour

COME LET US WORSHIP / COME LET US WORSHIP

Gathering Hymn as the Advent Wreath is Lit: ELW 257 “*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*” (verses 1-3, 7-8)

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.**

Kyrie:

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.**

Psalm 89: 1 - 4, 19 - 26

¹Your love, O LORD, forever will I sing;
from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.

²**For I am persuaded that your steadfast love is established forever; you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.**

³“I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn an oath to David my servant:

⁴**‘I will establish your line forever, and preserve your throne for all generations.’ ”**

¹⁹You spoke once in a vision and said to your faithful people:
“I have set the crown upon a warrior and have exalted one chosen out of the people.

²⁰**I have found David my servant;
with my holy oil have I anointed him.**

²¹My hand will hold him fast

and my arm will make him strong.

²²**No enemy shall deceive him,
nor shall the wicked bring him down.**

²³I will crush his foes before him
and strike down those who hate him.

²⁴**My faithfulness and steadfast love are with him,
and he shall be victorious through my name.**

²⁵I will set his hand on the sea, and his right hand on the rivers.

²⁶**He will say to me, ‘You are my father,
my God, and the rock of my salvation.’**

Romans 16: 25 - 27

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.**

Song to Welcome the Gospel: ELW 251 *“My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness”*

Gospel: Luke 1: 26 - 38

The holy gospel according to Luke. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.”

But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 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. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” 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. 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. For nothing will be impossible with God.”

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.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Homily (by guest presider and homilist Rev. Leena Jensen):

God with Mary—God with us

Is this where the Christmas story begins?

When we look back at where this season of Christmas got its origins our gospel reading today takes us to Mary, the mother of Jesus. So we think. But, when we go back another 6 or 700 years to the prophet Isaiah ch.7 v.14 speaking to the house of David, saying “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel, “God with us”.

Mary in our reading today, was said to be religious and devout, so she would have been aware of this prophecy as a person of the Jewish faith. So, with this surprising encounter with the angel Gabriel, and her confusion, of how she might have found favour with God. Knowing all of this Mary said “let it be to me according to your word.” It is a statement of courage, of certainty, of confidence, of conviction.

In our modern day and our anticipation of Christmas, most of us recognize that it can actually be one of the most stressful times of the year. Our lives are full all year long and then comes Advent with additional preparations and activities to make it a special Christmas. Sometimes it feels like we put life on hold for Christmas. We just try to overlook the stuff that makes life difficult, or sad, some would even call a struggle. This year the COVID 19 has not made our normal stress any easier.

For many in the church and community there are those feeling of loneliness. There is the experience of grief and we can develop a bad case of the Christmas blues.

All of this at a time when we sing songs like Joy to the world and use phrases like peace on earth. For many, Christmas can still be overwhelming.

I cannot imagine anyone more stressed about the first Christmas than Mary. The Virgin Mary received one of the greatest surprises in history; a surprise that turned her world upside down and not only hers. Mary teaches us that God is NOT limited by what is physically impossible. Vv. 35-38.

Mary asks an important question, “How will this be?”

And the angel answers the Holy Spirit will come upon you and overshadow you. In short, a miracle will take place.

Mary will suddenly be with child. V. 36-37. The Angel Gabriel also tells Mary about her cousin Elizabeth who is in her 70s that she is 6 months pregnant, as if to say to Mary, it is in the hands of God and it is not impossible.

Of course, the two situations are not the same. Mary is very young. Elizabeth was perhaps 70 years old. But the point is that both are examples of human impossibilities being made possible by God. As Gabriel prepares to leave, His words say it all ...”for nothing is impossible with God.”

. Let me ask you...what are you facing right now?

- Is it fear? **Nothing is impossible with God.**

- Can't get along with your family?

- Think you will never be able to forgive? **Nothing is impossible with God.**

- Think you'll never feel loved? or

Feel like you're too tired to go on? or

Feel like you'll never get out of debt? **Nothing is impossible with god.**

God is not limited by what is physically impossible for us. •

Jesus changed water to wine at a wedding. He can still change a marriage. Jesus healed the incurable. The ones who had no hope whatsoever.

He is not limited by what is physically impossible for us.

He is not limited to OUR resources.

Words of assurance have purpose. They offer comfort when the status quo is about to be altered and the rhythms of the everyday life about to be disrupted. Moreover, words of assurance offer comfort when a community is under duress and suffering attack and persecution presently (1 Peter 1:6-7; 3:14) or in the near future (Revelation 2:10). Words of assurance also create the space for courageous action to take place,

This advent season, may we sit with the assurance that God is with us.

As we reflect on this—*unprecedented*, year of the COVID 19 in addition to everyday life challenges —may we receive the words of Gabriel to Mary as our own—God is with us.

The Divine visits an unsuspecting young girl named Mary; and the Divine visits us.

May the changes of life be viewed through and conditioned by this assurance—God is with us.

Even as a young girl by the name of Mary was impacted by the social realities of her day, we, too, are immersed in and squeezed by the societal challenges of 21st-century around the world. And God is with us. The angel Gabriel through Mary reminds us, assures us, comforts us—yes, God is with us. Amen.

Hymn: ELW 265 *“The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came”*

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

A brief silence.

Gracious God, all generations call you blessed. In this holy season we pray for our neighbors of other denominations and faiths. 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. Nourish those who lack access to adequate food and nutrition. Bless the work of advocates, community organizers, and food pantries. Especially The Grind, St. Joseph's Food Bank, St. Vincent De Paul, Robbie Dean Crisis Centre, and First Step Options. 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 Florence Felske, Richard Hubert, Dorian Verch, Sharon Watt, and Leona Woito. 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.**

Gathering all our prayers into one, we pray the prayer that you have 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.**

Blessing: May our Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us in the Risen Life of Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song: ELW 267 *“Joy to the World”*

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude:

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