

## Home Service for December 6, 2020

### Welcome and Announcements

As you know we no longer are able to have in person worship service, so everyone is using the home service until the time comes that we can return to worship in the church building. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship, just like we did in the church building.

*Wilderness, exile, tribulation, rejoicing: Your way runs through all of these, O God. May we prepare this way anew.*

### Call to Worship:

Lift up your voice. Lift it up, do not fear. Feeding, gathering, carrying, leading: this is how God will come. The old will pass away. A new world will dawn. Love, faithfulness, righteousness, peace: These will mark God's new day. Love needs a path. Peace needs a highway. Even as we wait, let us make a way for God: In our hearts and in our world. Let us worship God.

### Opening Prayer:

God, we are confident you are coming, bringing a world where all will be made right. Calm our anxiety, strengthen our patience, and keep our hope aflame, as we work towards, and wait for, your new day. Amen

### Prayer of Confession:

Sometimes, we are not ready for things to be made new. Help us, god, to imagine the new earth that you envision for our world. Help us see ourselves in it . Give us wisdom and courage to hasten the coming of your day. Amen.

### Words of Assurance

*God is patient. Think of this as salvation. God speaks peace. All will be made well. Amen.*

## Lighting of Advent Candles:

Last Sunday we lit the candle of Hope, remembering the hope which comes in Christ. (Light Candle).

Today we light the second candle of Advent, the candle of Peace. God has a peaceful dream for the world, and we dream it too. We dream of peaceful world full of wolves and leopards and lions eating and sleeping and dancing with lambs, kids, and calves. We dream of a peaceful world where nations come together, where war is a memory, and we eat at one table.

We light this candle in Peace.

On this day, we remember the Lord of All who brings peace surpassing all understanding.

Read Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

You, LORD, showed favor to your land;  
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

<sup>2</sup>You forgave the iniquity of your people  
and covered all their sins.<sup>[b]</sup>

I will listen to what God the LORD says;  
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—  
but let them not turn to folly.

<sup>9</sup>Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,  
that his glory may dwell in our land.

<sup>10</sup>Love and faithfulness meet together;  
righteousness and peace kiss each other.

<sup>11</sup>Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,  
and righteousness looks down from heaven.

<sup>12</sup>The LORD will indeed give what is good,  
and our land will yield its harvest.

<sup>13</sup>Righteousness goes before him  
and prepares the way for his steps.

## Prayers of the People:

Loving God, as we enter into this Advent season, help us to remember what is truly important in our lives. In his "last lecture," Jesus instructed us to "Be on guard!" and to "Be alert!" Yet we have become complacent and have forgotten these admonitions to be aware. Keep our eyes open to your arrival and inspire us to live as if each day were our last day. Let our focus be on preparing our hearts and

homes for your coming -- not on the frenzy of shopping and decorating. Help us to slow down and enjoy the simple things in life.

Let us care for one another, and be mindful of those who enter this season, not with a sense of gladness, but with grief or wistfulness. We lift up, in particular, this morning those who are ill, who mourn the loss of a loved one, who struggle to make peace with painful memories of past Christmas seasons. May their hope be in you and the promise of your return. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and Savior. Amen.

## Lord's Prayer

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

Read the Lesson: Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her  
that her hard service has been completed,  
that her sin has been paid for,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice of one calling:  
"In the wilderness prepare  
the way for the LORD <sup>[a]</sup>;  
make straight in the desert  
a highway for our God. <sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be raised up,  
every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level,  
the rugged places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
and all people will see it together.  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, “Cry out.”  
 And I said, “What shall I cry?”  
 “All people are like grass,  
 and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.  
<sup>7</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
 because the breath of the LORD blows on them.  
 Surely the people are grass.  
<sup>8</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
 but the word of our God endures forever.”  
<sup>9</sup> You who bring good news to Zion,  
 go up on a high mountain.  
 You who bring good news to Jerusalem,<sup>[c]</sup>  
 lift up your voice with a shout,  
 lift it up, do not be afraid;  
 say to the towns of Judah,  
 “Here is your God!”  
<sup>10</sup> See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power,  
 and he rules with a mighty arm.  
 See, his reward is with him,  
 and his recompense accompanies him.  
<sup>11</sup> He tends his flock like a shepherd:  
 He gathers the lambs in his arms  
 and carries them close to his heart;  
 he gently leads those that have young.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 2 Peter 3:8-15a

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives <sup>12</sup> as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.<sup>[b]</sup> That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

<sup>14</sup> So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. <sup>15</sup> Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah,<sup>[a]</sup> the Son of God,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>2</sup> as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way"<sup>[c]</sup>—

<sup>3</sup> "a voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
'Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.'"<sup>[d]</sup>

<sup>4</sup> And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. <sup>6</sup> John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup> I baptize you with<sup>[e]</sup> water, but he will baptize you with<sup>[f]</sup> the Holy Spirit."

## Message

Our lessons this morning speak about the coming of Christ. During this Advent season, we learn about the three ways that Jesus comes into our lives, Jesus, the babe born in the manger, Jesus who is coming in the second coming, and Jesus who is in the present, in our lives. This Jesus brings His grace and forgiveness into our lives. This is the Jesus that I want to speak on; the one who brings forgiveness as we repent.

John the Baptist is speaking about this Jesus when he says: "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

As Mark begins this passage with a quote from Isaiah which speaks about this coming of the one who will prepare the way for Jesus when he says: "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight--"

And finally Mark says this about John: "John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." John had come to prepare the way for Jesus, to call the people to repentance.

John's job was to make people ready for the coming of Jesus. John made the people ready by preaching a baptism of repentance. He wanted the people's hearts to be ready to receive the grace of God that was coming in the form of a person name Jesus. He wanted the people to know, to believe that they were sinners in the eyes of God, that they needed the redemption that was coming in the form of this peasant carpenter.

John was asking the people to look at their own lives, to see their need for the one who was coming. John the Baptist asked the people to repent, to look at their lives of sin, and then repent, to make a U -turn, to turn away from their sins.

With Jesus we are permitted even encouraged to make U-turns. We are to repent, to turn away from, to turn around from those sins that hinder the work of Jesus in our lives. We do this not to make ourselves worthy of Jesus, but because of His love and forgiveness for us, our repentance comes forth. Repentance does not bring forgiveness, but forgiveness brings repentance. It is not done in the hope that God might respond but was itself a response to the news that God has acted first.

We repent, we make u-turns in life because of the great love God has for us, we accept his forgiveness, then we change, then we turn around, then we repent.

This concept of repentance only occurs in this chapter and verse in the Book of Mark's gospel. Mark wants to make the point that repentance is very important. It marks the stage for the coming of Jesus in our lives.

In repentance; we are turning back to the ideal, the way God created us to be. Our repentance is accepting and acknowledging that we are sinners, who need the forgiveness of almighty God.

In our act of repentance, we are turning to God, asking him in a sense to recreate a new person, one who is more like what God intended us to be in the first place. In the act of repentance we are taking the I, that personal pronoun out of the picture, and replacing it with a three-letter word, G O D , God.

In our act of repentance, we are declaring that we are no longer relying on ourselves, but we are surrendering to God, so that He may, through the waters of

our baptism, recreate a new person, a person who is closer to the image that God created each of us to be at the beginning of time.

Repentance for us is when we repent and turn, or make that u-turn back to what God intended for us to be. In sin, we are less than God intended for us to be. In Christ, in our u-turn, we are becoming more and more like God intended us to be at the beginning of time. We are given the power by Christ to repent, to make that u-turn.

In quoting Isaiah's prophecy, Mark demonstrates how John the Baptist's ministry was a critical sign; given by God - to indicate that the Good News of Jesus Christ was real. He was giving proof that the Good News that he was writing about is faithful to the prophetic scriptures given by God to his people. Do you believe in the sign that John the Baptist was pointing too? Do you believe in the forgiving power of Christ in your life today?

John was pointing to the one who was coming, who has come into this world to bring forgiveness as we turn away from sin.

As we get out the lights, the tree and the decorations may we be reminded that all of these outward, seasonal preparations remind us to look inside. We look inside and see hearts that need lots of work to prepare for Jesus' arrival. Thankfully and blessedly that Lord works that miraculous change. God does it by grace. When we honestly look at our hearts we discover the reason for our sinful ways. We see our helplessness. In see our helplessness there is only direction to turn. We look to Jesus and rejoice in the undeserved forgiveness that God provides through the precious birth, life, death, and resurrection of His only begotten Son. Look beyond the offerings of this world. "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things"(COLOSSIANS 1:1,2). In this way we can begin to be truly prepared for Jesus' arrival. AMEN.

Benediction:

*Nothing is impossible with God. Nothing is impossible. Depart in peace, spread the story of Christmas in all you do and say. Nothing is impossible with God. May the blessings of God our Creator, Jesus the Christ, and the Holy Spirit be with you always. Amen.*