

Home Service for December 27, 2020

Welcome and Announcements

Although we cannot meet together in the church building we can share worship together in our individual homes. We will continue to work to stay connected and be there for each other during the difficult time. We are going through something never experience before. I hope this will help you worship God today with those who are in your home. Add hymns if possible, too.

Even as an old man, Simeon was able to see, in the child Jesus, the promise of God's salvation. What do we see?

Call to Worship:

The Christmas tree lights have dimmed. The once-wrapped gifts have been shared. But the awesome love of God still shines brightly in our hearts. Our spirits resound with the good news of salvation. God is with us! Thanks be to God! AMEN.

Opening Prayer:

Lord of mercy and joy, You have given to us the blessing of your Son Jesus who will make known your presence, forgiveness, and love to each one of us. Be with us this day and keep our hearts and minds open to receive your love and peace. Enable each of us to be people of joy and hope as we encounter others. We ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

Lord of living light, we hear the story of the Magi and tie it together with our warm Christmas celebration. It feels comfortable to us. Break those bonds of comfort and help us to realize the risk of witness and discipleship for those who follow your light. Shine brightly in us and through us. Forgive the blindness we so often offer to you. Give us vision of what you would have us be and do in the Light of Your Love. AMEN.

Words of Assurance

Light has come to you. Your light has come and it has erased the darkness. Now we can walk and work in the light. You are loved by God and called to God's service. AMEN.

Read Psalm 148:

Praise the LORD.^[a]

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.

² Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

³ Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.

⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.

⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for at his command they were created,

⁶ and he established them for ever and ever—
he issued a decree that will never pass away.

⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,

⁸ lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
stormy winds that do his bidding,

⁹ you mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,

¹⁰ wild animals and all cattle,
small creatures and flying birds,

¹¹ kings of the earth and all nations,
you princes and all rulers on earth,

¹² young men and women,
old men and children.

¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for his name alone is exalted;
his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

¹⁴ And he has raised up for his people a horn,^[b]
the praise of all his faithful servants,
of Israel, the people close to his heart.

Praise the LORD.

Prayers of the People:

God of mystery and love, help us move from the sweet experience of the birth of the Christ Child into the reality of the powerful witness of Jesus who will be Messiah for us all. Remind us again that this season is not about bows and boxes, feasts and family; it is about preparing us, your people, for a mission and ministry of hope and peace for this aching and angry world. Empower us to be people of great faith, placing our trust in you, believing that peace is not only possible, it truly can happen if we will work with you and with one another. As we have spoken in our hearts and with our voices, our concerns for those near and dear to us, remind us that you hear these prayers and you respond with love to each one. Let us be in prayer with one another, for one another, for our church and our community, for our nation and our world, for all earth's people and creatures, that we may be those who promote peace. Give us courage and strength. Help us reach across areas that divide, offering compassionate assistance wherever it is needed. Bless each one of us in your service, for we ask this in Jesus' Name. 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 61:10- 62:3

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹ For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. ² The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow.

³ You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Galatians 4:4-7

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Luke 2:22-40

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”^[a]), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”^[b]

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss^[c] your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

³³ The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four.^[d] She never left the

temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Message

We have completed the season of Advent, celebrated Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, but we are still in the Christmas season. How did this get started? It started by God making a decision at the beginning of time.

God made a decision that affects our whole lives and the lives of those who follow. It is that decision that we should celebrate each and every day, not only during the Christmas Season. It is that decision that the entire world celebrates during this Christmas season. It is a decision that creates all the excitement, all the joy, all the happiness this time of year. God made a decision that affects all lives, a decision made without our consent, without our knowledge, without our approval. A decision was made that affects our lives now and for the rest of eternity. That decision was for God to send his Son to earth, so that we might have the opportunity to have eternal life. God made a decision out of love for us, out of love for the creation, God decided to come to earth, to walk among us, to be like one of us, so that we could see in a very real way how much he loves us.

God made a decision to do this without consulting us, without asking our permission, without us really having anything to say about the matter. God wanted our salvation to be in His hands, not ours. God decided that sending his Son to earth having him walk among us, live with us, then die for our sins and rise on the third day, would be the only way that God the Father could be reconciled with the children of His creation, in other words with us. So God decided to do this for us. God decided because He is a God of love, a God of mercy, a God of compassion. God made this kind of decision because He knew that we could not by our own merits, our own works, and our own efforts make ourselves worthy in his eyes. God knew we could never live up to the perfection He wants, so He decided He would live up to that perfection Himself, then punish Himself for our sins, and then tell us that by believing in what He has done for us. We would be made right with Him. This is the decision that we celebrate this Christmas season.

Some good news for today, Christmas Day is over. We can relax, take it easy, the food is all baked, the tree is all decorated, the presents are all unwrapped, and the

holiday is finished. But now, we have to decide when the Christmas decorations need to be put away, there are piles of wrapping paper to put away, and there are those extra added pounds to be lost, because we had such good food during these holidays.

These activities are a few of the Christmas season we forget. They seem to be an anticlimax to the Christmas Day celebration. Somehow these things cleaning, losing weight, putting things away, don't seem to fit in just right with that Christmas Spirit. Somehow they just don't feel right with the glitter, the excitement, the wonder, the awe, the majesty and the beauty of Christmas. I would disagree; they are part and parcel with the Christmas Season.

These activities have as much to do with Christmas, as the event itself, because Christmas just doesn't end after Dec. 25th, but what happened during Christmas lives on and on. It lives in our memories; it lives as we see anew what this Christ child means for us. The Christmas spirit, the birth of Jesus lived on in so-called outcasts of society as we read about Simeon and Anna in our gospel lesson this morning. Christmas does not end with the day being over, but Christmas, and what it truly means lives on each day.

The Christmas Spirit was revealed first to two old people, Simeon and Anna. They saw something 40 days after Christmas that no body up to that time had seen. The shepherds, the religious ruler who heard rumors of his birth, his father and mother, all didn't really understand or see in this child the image of God. The only ones, who recognized the Messiah in the man-child, God in Jesus, were two aged, wrinkled, Simeon and Anna."

Simeon and Anna saw and they believed, they saw and worshiped, they saw and lived in that grace they experienced from that child, they saw and continued to serve God through others. These marvelous people, this aged man and woman are a fine example for us of how God continues to reveal himself to most unlikely people of society. God doesn't always reveal himself to the powerful, the wealthy, the healthy, the wise, the famous, and the upper crust of society. He reveals himself to the lowly, the outcasts, aged, who society has, frown on, who society has disregarded as weak, and worthless, but God sees as whole and holy.

God came as a child to this earth to be with all of society, even the so-called outcasts. God did not send us a book, a picture, a song, or an idea. He did not send us a sermon or even a friend. God came himself. He gave us His presence which was so much more than an explanation. He gave us His own life, death and resurrection.

God came to earth as a child born in a manger; He came so we would know that he understood the human predicament of sin. He came so He could take away our sins and give us eternal life.

God came to earth for all those who acknowledge they cannot handle life alone. God came to earth, for those who have not measured up by earthly standards. He came for the poor, the sick, the chronically ill, the despised, the broken, those experiencing broken relationships, and the handicapped.

God comes to all those who live in the humility that they cannot handle life alone. He comes to make winners out of losers. God does the work not us. He does it with His own timetable in His own way, through His own means. We cannot take any credit at all.

Who would have thought that an old dying priest would be the one to bless the Baby and declare for all to hear that this baby would be the light to lighten the Gentiles? For Simeon says, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

Simeon declared the mission and ministry of Jesus and his followers. It was some 33 or more years later until that mission truly began in earnest to the Gentiles and that mission is not complete yet. God's timetable is not for human minds or souls to understand, or predict.

Throughout the Bible, God has always seen past the negatives to the positives, that God has seen in all of us, including the outcasts of society, a worth, holiness, and a dignity that others fail to see. His eyesight is better than ours, for He sees the worth of the individual. When we see people as aged, crippled, handicapped or as an outcast of society, in God's eyes they are beautiful members of His family. Amen.

Benediction:

We have been given the Great Light, which has come into the world. This light of peace and hope, joy and love, shines on us, in us, and through us, to all whom we meet. Go now in peace, and let the light of God's great love go with you. AMEN.