

St. John and Bethesda Lutheran Churches

Third Sunday of Advent
Sunday, 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.

GATHERING

WELCOME

The Lord has done great things for us. (Ps. 126:3)

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Blessed are you, God of might and majesty, for you promise to make the desert rejoice and blossom, to watch over the strangers, and to set the prisoners free.

As we light these candles, satisfy our hunger with your good gifts, open our eyes to the great things you have done for us, and fill us with patience until the coming of the Lord Jesus.

O ransomed people of the Lord, come,
**let us travel on God’s holy way
and enter into Zion with singing. Amen.**



GATHERING SONG *Christ, Be Our Light* (ELW 715)



1 Long - ing for light, we wait in dark - ness. Long - ing for
 2 Long - ing for peace, our world is trou - bled. Long - ing for
 3 Long - ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long - ing for
 4 Long - ing for shel - ter, man - y are home - less. Long - ing for
 5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,
 hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone
 wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,
 warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,
 hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.
 has pow'r to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.
 bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.
 shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.
 to one an - oth - er, signs of your king - dom come.



Refrain
 Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

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.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE *My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness* (ELW 251)



1 My soul pro-claims your great-ness, Lord; I sing my Sav - ior's praise!
2 To all who live in ho - ly fear your mer - cy ev - er flows.
3 To Is - ra - el, your ser - vant blest, your help is ev - er sure;



You looked up - on my low - li - ness, and I am full of grace.
With might - y arm you dash the proud, their schem - ing hearts ex - pose.
the prom - ise to our par - ents made their chil - dren will se - cure.



Now ev - 'ry land and ev - 'ry age this bless - ing shall pro - claim—
The ruth - less you have cast a - side, the low - ly throned in - stead;
Sing glo - ry to the Ho - ly One, give hon - or to the Word,



great won - ders you have done for me, and ho - ly is your name.
the hun - gry filled with all good things, the rich sent off un - fed.
and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all a - dored.

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.

¹The 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.

⁴**They 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.

⁹**Their 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.

¹¹**For 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.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 126

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.**

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.

¹⁶Rejoice 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.

²³**May 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.**

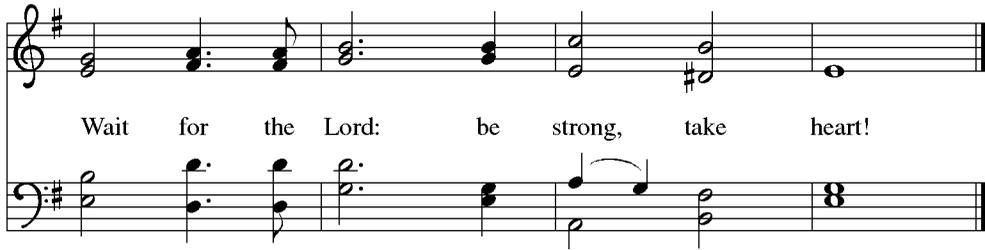
²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *Wait for the Lord* (ELW 262)

The image shows a musical score for the Gospel Acclamation "Wait for the Lord" (ELW 262). It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 8/8. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: "Wait for the Lord, whose day is near." The score ends with a double bar line and a sharp sign (#) followed by the number 8.



GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

⁶There 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 OF THE DAY *Prepare the Royal Highway* (ELW 264)



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

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.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

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

God of preachers and messengers, 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, **especially Deb and Sam at Bethesda and Damon, Linda, Becky and Morgan at St. John.** Embed your word in their hearts. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of every living creature, 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.**

God of all peoples and nations, 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.**

God of exiles and wanderers, 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.**

God of the powerful and helpless, 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 especially for our loved ones at *Bethesda*: **Lenyce Lawrence**, **Wes Moffatt**, **Gary Kalskett** and at *St. John*: **Jodi Klein**, **Karen Cadwell**, **Jean Dommer**, **Audrey Androy**, **Davie Vander Kolk**, **Grant Gorham**, **Jim Berka**, **Pat DeLong** and **Pam Odland** and those we name in our hearts or on our lips. Make your church a place of refuge and healing. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of sinners and saints, 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.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

OFFERING

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. **Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

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

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those

who sin against us.

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

SENDING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BLESSING

Thus says the Lord: Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come,
and my deliverance be revealed.

Savior of the nations, come!

Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG *People, Look East* (ELW 248)



1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the crown - ing
2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is
3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more light the
4 An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who brings new



of the year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble,
plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish,
bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er,
life to earth. Set ev - 'ry peak and val - ley hum - ming



trim the hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo - ple, look
that in course the flow'r may flour - ish. Peo - ple, look
bright as sun and moon to - geth - er. Peo - ple, look
with the word, the Lord is com - ing. Peo - ple, look



east, and sing to - day— Love, the Guest, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Rose, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Star, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Lord, is on the way.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.

Who Are You?

John knows who he is. When the Pharisees' messengers demand that John give his credentials, he confidently responds that he is on a divinely appointed mission to witness to the light of Christ. He references the Hebrew Scriptures, orienting himself within the wider story of God's relationship with Israel. John knows that his testimony is important.



It is notable that John also knows who he is *not*. In this conversation alone, he clarifies that he is not the Messiah, nor a reincarnation of Elijah, nor a prophet. He emphasizes that he is not even worthy to untie the sandals of the one who comes after him. In other words, John has the humility to admit that he is not Jesus.

The gospel writer says that John “confessed” these declarations about who he was and who he was not (John 1:20). This means that he freely gave public testimony, going “on the record,” so to speak.

Today, many Lutheran churches include a rite of communal confession during Sunday worship. When we confess together, we publicly declare who we are *not* by naming our captivity to sin. We are not God. We have not loved God wholeheartedly and have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Yet, confession also reminds us who we *are*. We are children of God. In the words of absolution, we hear the truth that we are completely forgiven by God, we are made alive in Christ, and we are strengthened with the power of the Holy Spirit (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, pp. 95–96).

The practice of repentance is a return to our baptismal vocation. We declare not only who we are but whose we are. We belong to God, who renews us to live in service of the gospel. Like John, we are witnesses to the light of Christ, and we are called to reflect that light as it shines in our lives and in our world.

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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WELCOME

Welcome to St. John Lutheran Church.
We are glad you joined us for worship this morning!
Please join us again for worship soon!

This Week at St. John

Today 10:30 AM – Worship
Wed. Pastor's at St. John
Thurs. Pastor's at Bethesda
Sun. 10:30 AM – Worship

THANKS TO THOSE WHO HELPED WITH THE SERVICE THIS MORNING

Reader: Kris Petersen
Organist: Damon Hopkins

Next Sunday, December 20, 2020

Reader: Becky Berens
Organist: Damon Hopkins

Attendance & Offering

Dec. 6 th Attendance.....	24
Envelope offering.....	\$2535.00
Loose offering	\$0.00

In order to meet the proposed budget for the church year, we need a weekly offering of approximately \$1600. Thanks.

Birthdays This Week

 **Fri** (12/18)..... Helen Miller, Greg Schultz

Our Long-Term Prayers

Each week we lift up each other in prayer. Sometimes the need for prayer continues for extended periods of time. As a church family, we care about those long-term needs. Please continue to keep these individuals and families in your prayers as they deal with long term illnesses and life changes. Also, please keep Pastor Chip and the office updated so the congregation knows when extra prayers are needed.

At Bethesda

- † Lenyce Lawrence
- † Wes Moffatt
- † Gary and Diane Kalskett

At St. John

- † Audrey Gorham
- † Sam and Diane Jacobs
- † Russ Miller (Leonard and Helen Miller's nephew)
- † Joel Berka
- † Jane and Dennis Schrauth (Suzie Schutlz sister and brother-in-law)
- † Arlene Eisermann (Ron Holst's Sister)
- † Cheryl Rath (Tom Heistand's sister)
- † **Grant Gorham address:**

Grant Gorham
3333 Burnet Ave.
Cincinnati, OH 45229-3026

Grant has been hospitalized.

Your prayers are especially needed at this time

