

December 13, 2020 – Advent 3
Bethany Lutheran Church (ELCA)

**RINGING OF BELL AND PRELUDE
WELCOME**

Those gathered are invited to respond with the bold printed words and sing the hymns.

PRAYER AND LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLE

We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, strengthen our hearts as we await the Lord's coming in glory. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may serve our neighbors in need. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. **Amen.**

HYMN DURING LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLE

Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah (verses 1-3)



- 1 Light one can-dle to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 2 Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 3 Light three can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 4 Light four can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.



He shall bring sal - va - tion to Is - ra - el, God ful - fills the prom - ise.
He shall feed the flock like a shep - herd, gent - ly lead them home - ward.
Lift your heads and lift high the gate - way for the King of glo - ry.
He is com - ing, tell the glad tid - ings. Let your lights be shin - ing!

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,
whose forgiveness is sure
and whose steadfast love endures forever.

Amen.

Together let us honestly and humbly confess
that we have not lived as God desires.

Amen.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Loving and forgiving God,
we confess that we are held captive by sin.
In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray.
We have not always welcomed the stranger;
We have not always loved our neighbor;
We have not always been Christ to one another.
Restore us, O God.

Wake us up and turn us from our sin.
Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.

People of God, hear this glad news:
by God's endless grace
your sins are forgiven, and you are free—
free from all that holds you back
and free to live in the peaceable realm of God.
May you be strengthened in God's love,
† Comforted by Christ's peace,
and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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.

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.**

HYMN *Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn*



1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for
2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -
3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when
4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing. Sing out your joy, for
man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is
all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so
dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.
qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;
qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.
crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -
mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -
Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in
Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less



geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and
kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to
won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and
sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and



lives now in - side us for - ev - er.
shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.
weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.
bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950
Music: REJOICE, REJOICE, Marty Haugen
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WORD

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

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.

A reading from Isaiah.

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. ⁴They 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. ⁹Their 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. ¹¹For 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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 126

Psalm 126 is a community prayer.

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.**

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.

A reading from 1 Thessalonians.

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.

²³May 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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? Al - le -
lu - ia. You have the words of e - ter - nal life.
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

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

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.

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

MESSAGE

HYMN *Hark, the Glad Sound!*



1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior
2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come



prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -
bond - age held. The gates of brass be -
soul to cure, and with the trea - sures
shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal



pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.
fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.
of his grace to • en - rich the hum - ble poor.
arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.

Text: Philip Doddridge, 1702-1751

Music: CHESTERFIELD, Thomas Haweis, 1734-1820

APOSTLES' 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

With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

*Each petition ends with, "Lord, in your mercy." Those worshipping respond with, "**Hear our prayer.**"*

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

During this time, an offering would normally be taken for the mission of Christ's church. We are grateful for your gifts and they are needed to continue the work of the church. We understand in this time some have lost their jobs, hours reduced and may be incurring a financial hardship and therefore unable to financially give; while others may be able to give more. Options on ways to give are found on our website (www.wbbethany.org). Thank you!

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with the gifts of ourselves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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,**

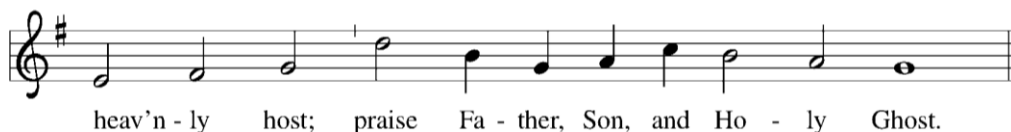
**as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

BLESSING

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting,
the long-expected ✝ Savior fill you with love,
the unexpected Spirit guide your journey,
now and forever.

Amen.

HYMN *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow*



Text: Thomas Ken, 1637–1711, alt.
Music: OLD HUNDREDTH, Louis Bourgeois, 1510–1561

SENDING

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE



Thank you for worshipping with us this morning! We invite you to join us again next Sunday at 9:30 AM on Facebook. Blessings to you as you shine forth the light of Christ in the world this week! Thanks, and praise to God for everything you do in the name of Jesus Christ!

If you are interested in learning more about Bethany Lutheran or interested in becoming a member, please contact Pastor Chad Whaley at 319-643-5998 or email (pastor@wbbethany.org).

If you would like to receive our monthly newsletter and email updates, please send your email address to our Administrative Assistant Paula Casper (blcsecretary@lcom.net).



THIRD SUNDAY
OF
Advent

During the four Sundays of Advent and Christmas Eve we will once again be adding items to our worship space which sustain us in our waiting and help guide us toward the joyous celebration of the birth of our Savior.

On this third Sunday, we introduce the two poinsettias on the altar and Christmas tree into the worship space God has provided us with. Poinsettias are a newer Christmas tradition beginning in the early nineteenth century. Its star shape reminds us of the Bethlehem star. Two legends have evolved from this flower. The first explains its origin. A little boy, having nothing to give the baby Jesus, prayed, and as he did, the flower grew at his feet. He picked the blossom and gave it to the Christ child. The second tells us the poinsettia was white, representing the purity of Christ, but when he died on the cross, the blossom changed to blood red. So, the star-shaped poinsettia reminds us of the holy night pointing us toward Good Friday. The Christmas tree has been a symbol of rebirth. Isaiah 60:13 states, "The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the pine, the fir, and the cypress together, to adorn the place of my sanctuary." A story is told of Martin Luther who was inspired by the beauty of an evergreen tree lit by the stars on Christmas Eve. He cut down the tree, brought it home, and lit the limbs with candles to simulate the stars in the sky above Bethlehem. The Christmas tree also reminds us of the tree on which Christ was crucified. It serves as a wonderful symbol of our salvation and forgiveness through Jesus. The star, which symbolizes the star of Bethlehem guiding the wise men to the newborn Christ child, will remain unlit until our Christmas Eve worship service.

The third candle (pink) on the Advent wreath we light today represents joy, reminding us of the angel's message that a Savior will be born, Christ the Lord.

One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting amid the growing darkness strengthen some of the Advent images found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of greens is clearly an image of everlasting life, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent and the growth of light. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its evergreen branches lead the household and congregation to the evergreen Christmas tree. In many homes, the family gathers for prayer around the wreath.

Sources Consulted:

Debbie Traftan O'Neal, *The Advent Wreath*, Augsburg Publishing 1988.



A weekly devotional has been prepared by Pastor Chad and can be downloaded from our website. (<https://wbbethany.org/wp-admin/post.php?post=135&action=edit>) Once there, you will also find a link to a Google Site Pastor Chad created with additional resources.



Christmas Eve worship will premier on our Facebook page at 5:00 PM. You will be able to watch it anytime thereafter. To include several musical pieces that are being provided by the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians and the Luther College Choir, we will have to record the worship ahead of time.

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Scripture passage from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).