

First Sunday in Advent
November 29, 2020
Living Faith Lutheran Church
Davis Bay, BC

One of the themes of the four Sundays in Advent is “waiting”—waiting with hope and longing for the coming into the world of the Light of the World. Although it has a rather subdued tone (much of Advent music is written in the minor key), it is not a penitential season as is Lent. The colour of Advent, royal blue, is the colour of hope. The use of the Advent wreath and the lighting of one (more) candle each Sunday encourages us as we wait. Advent’s Prayers of the Day all begin with the words: “Stir up. . .” In other words, while we wait in the gathering darkness, we ask God to “stir up” within us the confidence and trust we need to sustain us. That cry for God’s sometimes comforting and sometimes “awe-some” presence to be “stirred up within us” is particularly relevant in these days of the pandemic while we wait—yet not for yesterday, but for tomorrow; not for the return of the “old world/old normal/old ways” but for the promised arrival or coming or “in-breaking” of a “new world/new kingdom/new reign”.

Preservice Music/Welcome/Announcements

Order for 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.

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 welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not 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.**

GATHERING

Gathering Song #261 “As the Dark Awaits the Dawn”

- 1 As the dark awaits the dawn, so we await your light.
O Star of promise, scatter night, loving bright, loving bright,
till shades of fear are gone.

- 2 As the blue expectant hour before the silv'ring skies,
we long to see your day arise, whole and wise, whole and wise,
unto your holy dawn.

- 3 As the moon reflects the sun until the night's decrease,
may we your healing light release, living peace, living peace,
unto your holy dawn.
- 4 Shine your future on this place, enlighten ev'ry guest,
that through us stream your holiness, bright and blest, bright and blest;
come dawn, O Sun of grace.

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the constant company of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. **And also with you.**

Kyrie

In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the whole world, for the wellbeing of the church of God,
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For this and all holy houses, and for all who offer their worship and praise,
let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord, Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us
to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day,
for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

WORD

The response to the first two lessons is "Thanks be to God"

First Reading Isaiah 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

²In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.

³Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob; that the Lord may teach us God's ways
and that we may walk in God's paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴The Lord shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

⁵O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Lighting of the Advent wreath

We praise you, O God, for this evergreen crown that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the first candle on this wreath, rouse us from sleep, that we may be ready to greet our Lord when he comes with all the saints and angels. Enlighten us with your grace, and prepare our hearts to welcome him with joy. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. **Amen.**

Second Reading I Corinthians 1:3-9

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind — ⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you — ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸God will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by God you were called into the fellowship of the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Acclamation **Let your steadfast love come to us, O Lord.
Save us as you promised; we will trust your word.**

*The response to the announcement of the Gospel is **Glory to you, O Lord.***

*The response after the reading of the Gospel is **Praise to you, O Christ.***

Holy Gospel Mark 13:24-37

²⁴But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.

³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake — for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Sermon

Hymn of the Day #438 “My Lord, What a Morning”

Refrain

My Lord, what a morning; my Lord, what a morning;
oh, my Lord, what a morning, when the stars begin to fall.

- 1 You will hear the trumpet sound, to wake the nations underground,
looking to my God's right hand, when the stars begin to fall. *Refrain*
- 2 You will hear the sinner cry, to wake the nations underground,
looking to my God's right hand, when the stars begin to fall. *Refrain*
- 3 You will hear the Christian shout, to wake the nations underground,
looking to my God's right hand, when the stars begin to fall. *Refrain*

Affirmation of Faith

**We believe in God the Creator who was, who is,
and who will be forever the source of all that is;
who loves the world and says it is good.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ - the presence of God embodied and among us.
Jesus walks with the lonely; eats with sinners; feeds the hungry;
forgives the unforgivable; and continues to show us the way.
He calls us to a life that death cannot end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, who has spoken through the prophets and
continues to urge us to live fully and honestly - seeking justice, loving kindness,
and walking humbly, as a forgiven and forgiving people whose joy gives life.**

**We believe in God's salvation now and in the world to come;
which is freely given to all and not a result of works.**

**We believe in the church as community. Though flawed and imperfect,
the church offers a place for everyone.**

**We believe that Christ is among us and leads us to give ourselves away in love.
We believe we are called to choose hope, to resist evil,
to advocate for the oppressed, and to rejoice in the gift of life. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world.
Hear our prayers for everyone in need. *A brief silence.*

We pray for the ministry we share in Christ's name. Open our hearts to your call for justice,
peace, and healing. Attune us to the needs of the world as you draw near.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for this planet in need of restoration: for devastated habitats, polluted waters, thawing ice, blazing fires, swelling floods, and long-lasting droughts. Renew the face of the earth and our relationship to it. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all people who care for others in our community and around the world. Fill them with compassion and the power to respond with justice for those who are oppressed, with welcome for those who are excluded, and with relief for those who suffer. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for people who are in crisis as the seasons change: for those without homes facing severe weather, for those who are unemployed or underemployed, and for those in poverty or facing food insecurity who need the services of local food banks who need us to provide and share what we have. Relieve their burdens, sustain their bodies, and ease their minds. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the people in our families and congregation who live with depression, anxiety, chronic pain, addiction, and other visible and invisible illnesses, *especially the losses of jobs, hope, mobility, vision or memory*. Ease their suffering and support them and their caregivers when they struggle with burnout and exhaustion. Particularly do we bring to the heart of God these sisters and brothers: Randi who mourns her beloved Karsten; for Helen and Maggie who are dying; for Bud and Brenda, Erika and Rikki, Walter and Tory, Al and Linda, Shirley and Steinar, Merv and Marlene, Marianne and Inez, Gwen and Ed, Pam and Dorothy, Ingrid and Albert, Evelyn and Elisabeth and those we name now aloud or in the silence of our hearts. . . Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We give thanks for the lives and witness of those who died while waiting for justice, peace, or healing, those whose memories we cherish, whose names we know and those who are known only to you. Sustain all who still yearn for the completion of your redeeming work. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Sharing of the Peace

A musical reflection will be played while the table is set

Offering Prayer

Generous God, you have created all that is, and you provide for us in every season. Bless all that we offer back to you, whether food or money, our talents and ourselves, that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing, in the name of Emmanuel. **Amen.**

MEAL

The Opening Dialogue

May God be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to our God.**

Let us give thanks to the God of grace. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

An Advent Prayer of Thanksgiving over the gifts

Holy God, the Beginning and the End, our Salvation and our Hope,
we praise you for creating a world of order and beauty.
When we brought on chaos, cruelty and despair,
you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy.
At this end of the ages your Son Jesus came to bring us your love
and to heal all the suffering world.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.
Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his life, death, and resurrection,
we await his coming again in righteousness and peace.
Send your Spirit on us and on this bread and wine we share:
strengthen our faith, increase our hope,
and bring to birth the justice and joy of your Son.
Through him all glory and honor is yours, Eternal and Everlasting One,
with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever. **Amen**

Fraction (Breaking of the Bread)

The gifts of God for you, the beloved people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Invitation to share in this foretaste of the feast to come

Even as we watch and wait, Christ is here. Wherever you are, eat and drink in hope.

A Song of the Assurance of hope's fulfillment #262 "Wait for the Lord"

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near; wait for the Lord, be strong, take heart!
Wait for the Lord, whose day is near; wait for the Lord, be strong, take heart!
Wait for the Lord, whose days I near; wait for the Lord, be strong, take heart!

Prayer after the Meal

Gracious and abundant God, you have done great things for us, and we rejoice.
In these gifts you give us life forever. In your boundless mercy, strengthen us
and open our hearts to the world's needs, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing

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

- 1 Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of ev'ry nation, joy of ev'ry longing heart.
- 2 Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king;
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.

Postlude

Dismissal

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Today, the first of the four weeks of Advent, begins a new journey through the church year with our guide and companion, St. Mark. Mark's Gospel, the shortest of the four Gospels, is the oldest and, therefore, one of the primary sources used by both Matthew and Luke in the writing of their Gospels.

Several distinguishing characteristics of Mark are his frequent use of the word “immediately”—an indication that Mark's Jesus is in a hurry, seemingly well-aware that he is destined to get to the purpose for which he came into the world—that is, his passion and death. And when that time comes, Mark slows down dramatically, spending the last half of his gospel on that significant event.

Another noticeable difference from the other Gospel writers is that, in Mark, there are no stories of Jesus' birth or his early life. Instead, Mark begins his story with the call of John the Baptist, and then moves quickly through Jesus' baptism and his time in the wilderness in order to proclaim Jesus' first public words which characterize the heart of Mark's Gospel: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Mark's Gospel also portrays a very human Jesus who displays disappointment, frustration (with his disciples) and conflict with the religious leaders over their use of the laws regulating daily life which prohibit the virtues of compassion, kindness and the welfare of others. Through Jesus' intentionally difficult-to-understand teachings, Mark hints at Jesus' reluctance to promote his identity as the Messiah out of “fear” at what it will mean in terms of his suffering—a reality expressed only in Mark's where Jesus speaks only once while on the cross—his cry: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

And last, but not least, Mark's Gospel contains no stories about the resurrection and resurrection appearances. In fact, his Gospel ends with these “troubling” words about the women who came to the tomb on Easter morning: “They went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”