



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

CHURCH AT HOME

Announcements:

Welcome to Trinity's worship resource for November 28, 2021, celebrating the First Sunday of Advent.

Pastor Mike is currently on a medical leave of absence. If you have a pastoral emergency, please contact Pastor Jack Dressler - **519-250-7210**.

Christmas Eve Service – There will be one service at 8pm. If you are interested in attending, please call the office (519-977-7787) and provide your name and the number of people that are planning to attend.

NOTE – There will be NO in-person service on Sunday December 26.

Thank you again for your support for Trinity. Please continue to mail in cheques, or drop them off in the church's mailbox or make your donation either through PAR or through the Donate button on the church's website, at "www.trinitylutheran.ca".

Worship

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

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection alert us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and redeem us for your life of justice, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16

In the Old Testament, "righteousness" often has to do with being faithful in relationship. God acts righteously both in punishing Israel for its sin and in having mercy. In today's reading, Jerusalem's future name—"The LORD is our righteousness"—proclaims that God is even now working salvation for Israel.

¹⁴The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

Psalm: PSALM 25:1-10

¹To you, O LORD,
I lift up my soul.

²**My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.**

³Let none who look to you be put to shame;
rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.

⁴**Show me your ways, O LORD,
and teach me your paths.**

⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

⁶**Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love,
for they are from everlasting.**

⁷Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions;
remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness,

O LORD.

⁸**You are gracious and upright, O LORD;
therefore you teach sinners in your way.**

⁹You lead the lowly in justice
and teach the lowly your way.

¹⁰**All your paths, O LORD, are steadfast love and faithfulness
to those who keep your covenant and your testimonies.**

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Upon Timothy's report from the congregation at Thessalonica, Paul is exuberant with gratitude for them. In this passage from his letter, Paul voices overflowing thanks, joy, and blessings for the people of this growing church.

⁹How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? ¹⁰Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

¹¹Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. ¹²And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. ¹³And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Gospel Reading: Luke 21:25-36

God will fulfill God's purposes and, already, hidden signs of that fulfillment abound. On that great day there will be dismay, perplexity, confusion, and terror, but God's people shall be given strength to stand boldly and receive God's promised redemption.

[Jesus said:] ²⁵“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

²⁹Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

The Sermon: Made New ByInterior Design

Exterior design is changing everywhere in this season of Advent. The exterior designs are nice, but they will do us no ultimate good because in the end it is interior design that counts. The new interior design will not be the result of something we do, but the result of something we allow to have happen to us.

I assure you this: God desires to do something inside us. God desires for something in the interior of our lives to be made new in this season. And there is the possibility that we might miss that crossing point.

In the Gospel reading just read, Jesus, at the end of his ministry, gives us advice that we can apply to the moment we anticipate his birth. The words of Jesus, taken out of context, can help us in this Advent adventure. Jesus said, "Observe, watch, get ready." He said that we ought to guard our hearts against waste and worry. To me, this is the soundest advice that we could get as we enter this season.

I once saw a bumper sticker which read, "Happiness is an inside job." I'm here to tell you that Advent is, too. What happens on the exterior is cosmetic and delightful but has limitations. What happens on the interior will occur when we choose to allow God to do something within us. And that something has eternal value.

There are many barriers to our being made new by interior design in this Advent season, but today, I'm just going to deal with three of them.

Tears can be a barrier to Advent. In this season there will be tears of joy and tears of pain. In many homes across North America, because of this pandemic, there will be gatherings in which a grandfather will look around the room at his children and grandchildren. At 87 years of age, he is aware that life is precious and short. At his age, he will realize how lucky he is to see everyone seated around him in relative peace and harmony. And he will cry. Those tears will be of deep joy. The family will not violate the moment by asking him why he is crying. They will understand. There will be wonderful tears of joy this season.

There will also be tears of pain. Please trust this: ***whatever you are feeling as we come into this season, you will feel it more intensely.*** People who are up are really up. People who are down really feel down. We feel more intensely whatever we bring to the season.

Those who are in pain will have a special task before them. They, like Jacob wrestling the angel, will need to hold their pain down to the ground until they are blessed, not by the pain, but through the pain. We will pray for the courage to wrestle our pain to the ground until we are blessed.

The psychiatrist, Scott Peck, was seated with a group listening intently to a woman describe in terrible detail the pain in her life. After she was through, Dr. Peck said quietly, "I am crying with one eye." He went on to explain that one eye of his was crying for the obvious pain that she was going through. The other eye, he said, was dry and gladdened by the fact that she had the courage to wrestle that pain to the ground until she was made stronger by it, rather than defeated by it.

So, bring your tears to Advent. Bring to this place the things you have lost, the things you are sorry for, and the things you have not forgiven in yourself, even though God has long ago forgiven you. The promise of God is that your tears will be transformed to triumph if you come to this place and grieve your own way and refuse to allow yourself to be fixed by the advice of others. By our learning to sit closely to each other in silence, God does the healing that we need so desperately. Tears can be a barrier to Advent, but God can make them a bridge.

Anxiety can be another barrier to Advent. In our Gospel reading, Jesus speaks of the "distress of the nations" and "people fainting with fear and dread of what is coming on in the world." Jesus describes an anxiety that comes upon us when the inevitability of things constantly changing in our world overwhelms us, like this co-vid 19 virus. Jesus would say that our anxiety is a sign of our help drawing near. Jesus would want us to know that "the dangers in our lives become God's opportunities in our lives." Did you know that the Chinese symbols for "crisis" and "opportunity" are the same symbol? Jesus knew that same anxiety.

Maybe some of you remember John Cooper, who was the Ohio State University football coach, quite a few years ago. As he was being interviewed once about a player who was in trouble with the law, a reporter asked if Cooper was going to kick the player off the team. He said, "No, I am not going to kick him off, because if I kick him off I can't help him. We are in the business of helping young people grow up, and you can't do that by turning them away when they make a mistake." I like that attitude.

That is good news for those growing up, and that attitude is especially good news at Advent. We know in our hearts that we are changed for the better, not by persons who dump us in the midst of our mistakes, but by the ones who stand by us in our stupidity until the light of new sanity dawns upon us. Those who do this in our lives are gifts from God. The love of God is the kind that cares for us just as we are and not as we ought to be. In time, we become the way we are treated, not the way we deserve to be treated. This is God's finest gift. So, "watch – for your anxiety is God's opportunity."

During the U.S. civil war, Mary Chestnut wrote a diary. She wrote it with great anxiety. As she witnessed Sherman's march to the sea, she wrote of a "solid column leaving not so much as a blade of grass behind; a howling wilderness, land laid waste, dust and ashes." This was her anxiety. But she failed to write about others' opportunity. If she were to have told all, she would have included the fact that "the slaves were dancing in the streets." One person's anxiety can be another's answer to the deepest desire of the heart.

Lastly, depression can be another barrier to Advent. Without over-simplifying, it appears to me that there are basically two kinds of depression. The first is the very understandable kind. I talked with a woman recently who had been married for over 37 years. Her husband died. She went through a period of depression. This is not hard to understand. Her loss led her into a depression that she could not get around, but had to get through.

There is a second kind of depression that seems to be chemical in nature. Some people have an imbalance in their systems that make them feel as if there is a great cloud over their heads even if they have everything and every cause to be happy. But because there is nothing apparent to be depressed about, a double bind occurs. The person has no reason to be depressed and has everything that should make one happy and is still depressed. Thank God we have lived long enough to know that something chemical is happening here which needs the good guidance of a competent psychiatrist who will both counsel and use medication as needed.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer experienced the kind of depression that we can understand. This Lutheran pastor, who opposed the Nazis in the Second World War, was finally captured and brought to a prison camp. His captors told him that he would be executed and, in fact, he was. As he waited with tranquility at times and depression at other times, he wrote these words: ***Depression is loyalty's hour – the hour when mother, lover, friend, brother, cover over calamity, till it is transfigured by gentle cosmic light!***

That is our deepest desire whether we know it or not: that somewhere in this season we will be blessed and bathed in "gentle cosmic light" that shows the way through the inevitable darkness that comes with living on this earth.

I read about a depressed songwriter who battled the successes of the past and a fear of the future. He was bankrupt. He had a cerebral hemorrhage that left him partially paralyzed. He worried that the creative spark that had made him rich was gone. He was depressed. The Bible readings that were his friends and that his soul could hear were readings such as, "Why have you forsaken me?"

In the midst of his depression, a man came by who had compiled scriptures together in a semi-orderly fashion. He suggested to the songwriter that he put some music to those readings. The songwriter looked at the text that read, "He was despised and rejected of humanity," and he felt that way, too. He read one text that said, "no one had pity." He read about the one who trusted God still. He read the words, "I know that my redeemer lives." He read the words "rejoice" and "hallelujah." And that night George Frederic Handel was blessed by a "gentle cosmic light." He was led slowly out of darkness by a desire to write music at a feverish pitch. He worked tirelessly for days until, with manuscript complete, he dropped into a seventeen-hour, death-like sleep, so that a doctor was summoned to see if he was alive. Out of depression came the light of the **Messiah**. Out of that depression was left for us a light that would light the corridors of the lives of countless millions for all ages. Out of that darkness, a man in deep depression began, as Stevenson said of the lamplighter, "punching holes in the darkness."

God punched holes in the darkness that we're in right now, he did it through Jesus. Jesus at the end of his life left us words that we can use as we anticipate the coming of the Christ. "Take heed. Listen. Be awake." "Your extreme danger is God's opportunity."

God is coming to make us new in this Advent season by interior design. Our job is to show up. God will do the rest. Peace be to you as we together begin the long journey in darkness toward the marvelous light of Bethlehem. **Amen.**

Peace

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

The Prayers of Intercession

In this season of watching and waiting, let us pray for all people and places that yearn for God's presence.

God of presence and peace, strengthen your church around the globe to proclaim the message of your love coming to the world. Open our hearts to recognize your face in all people and in all of creation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mighty redwoods and microscopic plants, fields and city parks, the wind and the waves, be a healing balm to our wounded planet. May we nurture what you have lovingly created. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of equity and compassion, bring righteousness and goodness to all peoples of the earth. Give a heart of discernment and integrity to leaders in our communities. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of comfort and care, be present with those who watch and wait. Come to all who await births, deaths, divorces, new unions, new jobs, retirements, healing, and life transitions of every kind. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of promises kept and new dreams awakened, shelter your people from destructive storms. We pray for those whose lives have been upended by natural disasters, for the work of Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran World Relief, and other relief organizations. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of presence, bless those of this community who cannot be with us this morning, and those who walk with them, especially:

In Residence: Margaret; Maria; Stan; Katie; Katherine; Cordelle;

Needing our prayers: Peter; Brenda; Doug; Dorothy; Bill; Bev; Ed; Marilyn; Jordan; Audrey; John; John; Greg; Sam; Katie; Walter; Hart; Frank; Pastor Mike & Patti

Recovering: Katherine; Carol; Betty; Greg; Kati; Bill; Sharon; Mary;

And all those we name in our hearts...

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of companionship and community, we give you thanks for the saints who journeyed with us and now abide in you. Even in distress and uncertainty, make us confident that your promises endure forever. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of new life, you come among us in the places we least expect. Receive these prayers and those of our hearts, in the name of Jesus. **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.**

Benediction

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus for whom we wait. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is near.

Thanks be to God!