



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

CHURCH AT HOME

Announcements:

Welcome to Trinity's worship resource for December 12, 2021, celebrating the Third 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".

Introduction

Christ's presence in our midst in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of the God in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one "more powerful" than John, even with a winnowing fork in hand, is good news—and cause for exultation—for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent.

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 the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-20

The prophet Zephaniah's message is mostly one of judgment for sin. This reading, however, which comes from the conclusion of the book, prophesies joy for Judah and Jerusalem. Judgment has led to repentance, and God's salvation is at hand.

¹⁴Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

¹⁶On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.

¹⁷The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;

he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing
¹⁸as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.

¹⁹I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.

And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise

and renown in all the earth.
²⁰At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.

Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-6

In your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

²Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might, and has become my salvation.

³**With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.**

⁴And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call on God's name;
make known the deeds of the LORD among the nations; proclaim that this name is
exalted.

⁵**Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be known in all the earth.**

⁶Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Despite being in prison, Paul is remarkably upbeat as he writes this letter. Here, he urges his friends in Philippi to trust God with all their worries and concerns with the hope that they will experience God's joy and peace.

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Gospel Reading: Luke 3:7-18

John the Baptist heralds the mighty one who is coming. John teaches that preparation for God's reign is not a matter of identity but of bearing fruits of merciful justice, radical

generosity, and vocational integrity.

⁷John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” ¹¹In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” ¹²Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” ¹³He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

¹⁸So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

The Sermon: REJOICE AND REPENT (Pastor Jack Dressler)

Remember when you were expecting your first child? Most of you know what that’s like. It was really something – at least for me it was! Now hold on to that thought.

Traditionally, this Sunday is called “Gaudete Sunday.” It means “rejoicing Sunday”, from the Latin word, gaudere, to rejoice. So today, the heavy weight of Advent is lifted for a time with rejoicing.

Now, there is something tricky about great gifts – especially when the gift is a child. Right? The lessons we just heard do a marvelous job of pointing to this insight. The first two are all about rejoicing. The prophet Zephaniah sings to the people, “the King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst, you shall fear disaster no more.” God is going to do great things for his people. All is well; God is at hand. “Rejoice” is also the first word we hear

from Philippians. Again, we are assured that the Lord is at hand, and this is a wonderful thought.

That is part of what it means to prepare for a gift. That is almost the very first thing you say when you discover someone is expecting a child; you say, “Congratulations,” – rejoice, this is wonderful news. We have all heard that a lot. Rejoicing is also a big part of what it means to prepare for Christmas. The good news of Advent is that God is coming to God’s people – to you and to me. God’s promises are being fulfilled. And we are to await that, to believe that, to realize that – and open ourselves fully to it. That is cause for celebration and for rejoicing.

Then we hear the Gospel and the image shifts. God is no longer pictured as a victorious warrior exulting over his people, but as a wrathful judge, an executioner who loves his work. We are standing at the River Jordan, face to face with John the Baptist at his most intense. John doesn’t say to rejoice; John says to repent. Paul told the Philippians not to be anxious about anything; John tells his hearers to flee from the wrath to come. Everyone in the Gospel is asking, “What shall we do? What has to change if we are to survive the great and terrible events that lie ahead?” For the axe is already laid to the root of the trees, and fire is prepared for burning the chaff. This is a very different message from “rejoice!”

And if you really think about it, that makes sense too. That fear, that anxiety, too, is part of our preparation and of our waiting. And it should be heard, and felt, at exactly the same moment we hear and feel, the call to rejoice. For the Lord we await in Advent is a Lord who makes a difference, who changes things. He is a Lord who offers both new life and new responsibilities, and who offers them together – simultaneously. Part of what new life means is that the old life just doesn’t work anymore – because everything is different. If we receive the gift of the Christ child, everything will change, and the direction and the focus of our lives will shift. It just works that way.

Remember the second thing everybody (or at least everybody who has been a parent longer than 20 minutes) says when they learn that you are expecting a child? The first thing said is always, “congratulations, we’re happy for you; it’s wonderful news.” The second thing is always in one form or another of, “boy are you in for it!” We are often told, and in a variety of ways, that things are going to change, that everything will be different. Nobody uses the word, but everybody tells us we have to repent, indeed that we are going to repent, to change our way of looking and living our life.

So, “Rejoice/repent!” Those are the words that go with all great gifts. Something wonderful is going to happen; and if, after you receive that gift, you try to live the way

you are living now, your life just won't work anymore. Life after such a gift is a sort of judgement on life before.

“Rejoice/repent!” This dual demand in the face of the coming of God is addressed to all of us – it is part of Advent. It is a perfect reflection of the ambiguity that permeates our vision and our experience. We await and try to prepare for the coming of a child – a child who changes everything. So Zephaniah is right, we are to rejoice, and give thanks to God, and sing. And John the Baptist is right, and this wonderful gift will also come as judgment, and with a power and a violence all its own. If we are going to take seriously the good news of Christmas, then things are going to be different.

Think about how much your first child changed your lives. Think of what it would look like to live comfortably with the child from Bethlehem – as a baby, and as an adult. For both the joy he offers and the demands he makes cannot be truly ours if we remain exactly the people we are today. And think about what repentance, the redirection of our attention looks like – it is not something weird or mysterious. Repentance generally looks pretty much like our lives now, but with a difference.

When the crowd at the Jordan River felt this crunch of anticipation and judgment, their cry of “what then shall we do?” was met with responses designed to force them into practical decisions. “Look at who you are,” John the Baptist said; “begin there.” When it comes to sharing, share from what you have. Don't wait until you have more, or until your offering can be of a higher quality – start now, start with what is already there.

Practice justice where you work, build fairness and mercy into your present dealings, your current life. Don't wait until you have a job where justice is easier – or more noticeable. Don't wait to be somewhere else, or to be doing something else, or to be someone else – begin with the road in front of you, walk that road, and so allow God to transform the real life you live right now. John did not even tell the despised tax collectors or the hated and feared Roman soldiers that they had to go somewhere else to begin. Just as being a son of Abraham was no exemption from the call to repent, so being a tax collector or a soldier was no barrier to repentance, to change. The business of repenting because of a gift of a child is much the same as rejoicing. It all has to do with transforming the life we are already living.

Rejoice and repent – in all things, with the real life we live in the real world. It really is a familiar situation. As it is with much else, this is also our response to the ambiguity that surrounds us, and to the reality of the coming of the Lord.

REJOICE, for what is happening is wonderful.

REPENT, because from now on, everything will be different. **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.

Holy God, renew your church and raise up leaders who announce your good news. Grant peace to congregations and seminarians in the midst of transition. Guide the work of candidacy and call committees. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creating God, your Spirit brought forth the earth and all that is in it. Breathe life into us, that we are inspired to live in harmony with one another and the planet. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Shepherding God, you lead your people in paths of righteousness. Raise up prophets in our own day who warn against captivity to greed and point us to the freedom found in generosity. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Nurturing God, you come near in times of worry and need. Cradle us in your arms, that we trust you and are not afraid. Attend to any who are hungry, imprisoned, or ill this day. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Rejoicing God, you exult over us in singing. Enliven the song of this assembly and bless the ministry of church musicians. With instruments and dance, join our voices to the song of all creation. 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.**

We give you thanks for your servants who showed us your goodness and grace. By the power of your Spirit, keep us steadfast in faith until we make our home with you. 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!**