



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

CHURCH AT HOME

Announcements:

Welcome to Trinity's worship resource for December 19, 2021, celebrating the Fourth 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 AND Sunday January 2, 2022 (we will be sending out our “Church at Home” on those days).

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”.

A Message from Pastor Jack Dressler:

My dear family and friends at Trinity:

When you receive this Church at Home newsletter, Christmas will not be very far off. For some of us it will mean picking up the pace at a greater speed, being inundated with a thousand things to do and not enough time to do them all. For others this season brings sadness and pain – a melancholy loneliness – for it is a time we remember being with loved ones who are no longer here. For some it is a time of great anticipation and excitement, as we prepare gifts for ones we love and looking forward to receiving gifts from others. For others it is a time of merriment and laughter, sharing love and fellowship with family and friends, remembering the birth of the Christ child and singing and praising His name.

One of the greatest challenges of Christmas is that when it is over we don't just go back to the everyday world, but return with the meaning and joy, the promise and commission of the Christ in Christmas.

Consider how some of the main characters of the Christmas story returned and how it might relate to our return. The shepherds went back singing praise to God. Can our return be filled with new wonder and praise from His coming? The wise men returned, another way. Did we come as seekers, as they did, and do we return as those who have found? Mary returned, pondering these things in her heart. Will we go on exploring, or be content with only a Christmas gospel? Simeon returned, and was ready for the next great dimension of life, vindicated and content. Are there deeper dimensions to our lives that need exploring on our return?

Those provocative lines by song writer, Jim Strathdee, speak to us here: "When the song of the angels is stilled and the star in the sky is gone, when the wisemen and the shepherds have found their way home, the work of Christmas has begun...". The work of Christmas is to reflect Christ's love and concern in the lives of all we meet. As it says in Luke 2:20 – "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them". May we be inspired and enthused with a new spirit to do the same.

May the Peace and Spirit of Christ's Love walk with you wherever you go and whatever you do this Christmas.

All our love and the Spirit of a MERRY CHRISTMAS be with you all, and a healthy, peace giving New Year.

Jack and Eileen Dressler and family

Introduction

Cradle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and Mary's magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ's advent is for "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is the kind of tension in which the

church always lives as when in holy communion—with high delight—“we proclaim the Lord’s death.”

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. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Micah 5:2-5a

The prophet Micah, having pronounced judgment upon Judah, speaks of a future shepherd-king who, like David, will come from the small town of Bethlehem. (Ephrathah refers to the area around Bethlehem.) This king will restore Israel and bring peace. New Testament writers understood this passage to be referring to Jesus.

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
 who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
 one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
 from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time
 when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
 to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
 in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
 to the ends of the earth;

^{5a}and he shall be the one of peace.

Psalm: PSALM 80:1-7

¹Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

²**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.**

³Restore us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

⁴**O LORD God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your people pray?**

⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

⁶**You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

⁷Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10

The author of Hebrews uses the image of religious sacrifice to convey the significance of Christ's coming. Through obedient acceptance of God's will, Christ allows his own body to become the greatest sacrifice of all, one through which we are made a holy people.

⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,
"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God'
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me)."

⁸When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]

Elizabeth, John's mother, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are two women filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. In Elizabeth's inspired greeting and Mary's song of praise we hear of a saving God who remembers, scatters, lifts up, and fulfills all things.

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

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

The Sermon: Magnificat (this sermon was written by Emma Hodge, who is the Church Warden at St. Michael and All Angels Church in England)

I want to start by asking you a question, How do you prepare for Christmas? There are so many different aspects of Christmas nowadays it is easy to overlook one aspect, There are not just all the different practical preparations to make for Christmas but also Spiritual preparations to make, and we are all here today as part of our spiritual preparation.

Our Gospel reading today is about two women who are also preparing in their own special ways. It is the story of two cousins, Elizabeth and Mary. These cousins have several things in common,

- Both of these cousins are in different stages of pregnancy
- Both the pregnancies were foretold by an angel
- Both cousins are carrying sons.

Let's take a moment to look at these two women in more detail,

Firstly, Elizabeth,

Elizabeth is married to Zechariah who is a priest in the temple in Jerusalem and Elizabeth is also from a priestly family. They live in the hill country near Jerusalem. Elizabeth and Zechariah are old and were childless, which in biblical times was a sign of having done something to upset God, however we know from earlier in Luke's gospel that Elizabeth is described as righteous in God's sight. The Angel Gabriel had visited Zechariah and told him that Elizabeth would become pregnant, as Zechariah didn't believe the angel, Zechariah had been unable to speak since that time, and Zechariah would only regain the power of his speech after his son was named, according to the Angel's instructions. Elizabeth had become pregnant and she had spent the first five months of her pregnancy in seclusion, part of the reason that Elizabeth spent 5 months in seclusion was to prepare herself, both practically and spiritually for the birth of her son. The angel who told Zechariah that Elizabeth would become pregnant also said that their son would be full of the Holy Spirit before his birth. Elizabeth's son is John the Baptist.

Now let's look at Mary,

Mary is Elizabeth's cousin and while Elizabeth is old, Mary is very young, perhaps only about 14. Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. Mary lives in Nazareth and had

very recently been visited by the Angel Gabriel who told her that she would be the Mother of our Lord. The Angel Gabriel also told Mary that Elizabeth was pregnant. As soon as Mary is told about Elizabeth's pregnancy, she goes to visit Elizabeth, Mary does not wait until she starts to show, she doesn't put off her journey, she goes as soon as the Angel Gabriel tells her that Mary will become pregnant and that Elizabeth's also pregnant.

This journey was about 90 miles, a distance of about from here to Yeovil and would have taken 4 or 5 days.

Mary was obedient to God's plan for her, even though there were potential risks and problems. Mary goes to her cousin Elizabeth for several reasons, part of the reasons are for Mary's preparation, both practically and spiritually, for the birth of her son.

Mary was obedient to God's plan for her, even though there were potential risks and problems. The angel's visit to Mary was not an everyday occurrence and her family and friends probably had difficulty understanding her story and experience, we know from scripture that an angel had to visit Joseph to make him understand, however the Angel told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth would understand her even though others might not; How would you react if a family member or friend told you they had been visited by an Angel? Over the next few days, as we prepare for Christmas, you may like to consider how Mary's family and friends would have felt about her experience.

Now let's look at the actual meeting.

Mary's visit to Elizabeth is part of her preparation. Elizabeth and Zechariah were able to provide support to Mary. Elizabeth and Mary were able to share their hopes and fears for both their pregnancies, their sons, and their lives.

At the time of Mary visiting Elizabeth; Elizabeth would be nearing the end of her sixth month of pregnancy. As soon as Mary arrives at Elizabeth's home, a very strange greeting occurs.

Firstly, Elizabeth's unborn baby leaps in the womb, this is not just the normal movement of an unborn baby in the womb, but something far more profound, It is a sign that the angel's prophecy to Zechariah that his son would be full of the Holy Spirit before his birth had been fulfilled. The Holy Spirit also filled Elizabeth and the Holy Spirit caused the unborn John the Baptist to recognise the unborn Jesus. Throughout history, the Holy Spirit has moved people in various ways. As we prepare for Christmas we may like to re-

flect on how the Holy Spirit has moved through our lives and the lives of people we know, as we do, we can give thanks for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, Elizabeth recognised something unique about Mary and as she greets her young cousin, she addresses her as "mother of my Lord". At no point had Elizabeth been told by any human or angel that Mary was pregnant (and Mary would not have been showing) nor that she would be carrying the Son of God, Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Elizabeth goes on to call Mary "Blessed among women" by calling Mary "Blessed", Elizabeth is identifying that Mary is Holy, that Mary has a role to play in God's plan, Elizabeth's words to Mary "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" forms part of the devotion known as Hail Mary which is used by Roman Catholics among others.

Thirdly, Mary's response to Elizabeth's greeting is a prayer that is frequently sung, it is known as the Magnificat, which we sang earlier in the service. This prayer is wonderfully rich, not only is it a powerful offering of her life to God's service in recognition of everything that God has done for her, but it is also a prayer for those who are hungry and for those in authority. Mary's knowledge of the Old Testament is evident in the Magnificat. The Magnificat has echos of the Song of Hannah which is found in the opening verses of chapter 2 of the first book of Samuel. As we continue our preparations for Christmas, we may like to read the song of Hannah and compare it to the Magnificat.

The readings and events in Luke's gospel; are not just in the bible to show us how prophecies are fulfilled, they relate to us today, The opening lines of the Magnificat are "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour".

This is Mary's personal prayer of devotion to God. In it she acknowledges the role that God plays in her life, Mary is risking it all by obeying God and being an unwed mother for God, however she knew that she was giving her life, all day and every day to the service of God. Mary wanted to play her part in serving God.

This is not just something that Mary does. Throughout history, other people, have used their lives, including their money, time and talents to the service of God, and have been willing to do things which their culture would not expect of them, two examples of this

are in this church, the font and this pulpit, both carved by a Victorian lady, but it does not always have to be something so grand or obvious, we can all dedicate each and every day of our lives to God.

Devotion to God involves worshipping God and for many people music is a key aspect of worship, 150 years ago, just 11 years after the previous church was built, this church had to be extended because so many people wanted to come here to worship God. One of the areas that was rebuilt is the chancel behind me where the choir sings and leads us in worship, including singing various settings of the Magnificat, all of this, in worship of God the father, God the Son, the son that was born of Mary, and God the Holy Spirit, the same holy spirit which filled John the Baptist before his birth. This church building and our church community has been a witness to the baby which Mary gave birth to throughout the generations, however we need to ensure that we continue in this witness.

So in the next few days, in the run up to the celebration of the birth of our saviour Jesus, will we find time each day to devote ourselves to God as we continue our spiritual preparation? One way we could do this is by using the prayer of Mary, the Magnificat as our prayer and reflect on the various aspects mentioned in the prayer,

May our souls always magnify the Lord and our Spirits rejoice in God our Saviour. **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.

Nurturing God, you give us life and care for our every need. Use the church's gifts and ministries for your service, bringing your word to all who seek your transforming grace. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creator God, you proclaim your boundless love for all that you have made. Renew barren lands, polluted waters, and melting ice caps. Make us servants of your creation that brings forth abundant life. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Righteous God, you bring down the mighty and lift up the lowly. Strengthen those who

seek justice. Bless the work of community organizers, activists, journalists, and all who call our attention to imbalances of power. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Compassionate God, you proclaim your love and mercy. Show your lovingkindness to teen parents and those who are pregnant. Comfort any struggling with infertility and those who await test results, are in treatment and hospice care, and others in need. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Gracious God, you fill the hungry with good things. Bless the feeding ministries of this congregation and community. Guide us to share your bounty with those who hunger or live in poverty. 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.**

Faithful God, you stir up the hearts of those who love you. We give you thanks for those who, like Mary, were courageous in their witness. Give us such courage until that day when you fulfill all things. 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!**