



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

December 22, 2024
Fourth Sunday in Advent

Announcements

Juice boxes are still needed at Street Help Shelter. The Welcome Centre Shelter for Women needs granola bars, fruit rollup-type items and another snack item for snack packs for children at the centre. Please leave donated items on the table in the Narthex.

Coming Up

December 24 – Trinity will offer two Christmas Eve services – one at 3 p.m. and another at 7 p.m. The afternoon service will feature our new organist/pianist Brandon Lesperance, while the evening service will be accompanied by Trinity’s choir and choir director Valene Daniel.

We Remember in our Prayers

In Residence: Cordelle

Members: Bunny, Donna, Ed, Edda, Joan, Susan, Connie, Lorraine, Brenda

Friends & Family: Anna, Asdis, Audrey, Dot, Jean, Mary, Randy, Roger, Rose, Frank, Tanya, Nash, Jeff

Thames Area Clergy: Rev. Nadine Schroeder-Kranz, St. Peter’s, Zurich

Introduction to the day

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.”

Hymns

ACS #905 We are waiting for Jesus

ELW #257 O come, o come, Emmanuel,
v. 1-4

ACS #902 Come now O God

ELW #267 Joy to the world

Advent call to worship

Alleluia the Christ child comes,
And we await his birth.
Let us throw off our distractions,
And allow the chaos to settle.
Let us watch for the signs,
And listen to the messengers.
Let us stand on tiptoe,
And shout aloud and sing.
Something new is emerging,
Something new is being birthed.

*~ written by Christine Sine (2012),
and posted on GodSpace.*

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

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: In place of the psalm this morning, we will sing ELW #251 – My Soul Proclaims your greatness

Second reading: Hebrews 10:5-10

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), 9 then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second.¹⁰ And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Gospel: Luke 3:7-18

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

Sermon

Rejoice – the proper response

The hymn we sang a few moments ago ... My soul proclaims your greatness ... holds a special place with me.

My first class at seminary was church history. It was a Monday evening. My last day at the newspaper

was the previous Friday and I had moved into my small room in Campus Ministry housing that morning.

I was used to lecturing in front of the class and not being on the receiving end of the lesson. I sat at a desk chatting with one of my new classmates when sheets of paper were handed out a few moments before the professor arrived.

The course was led by a former pastor from Pasadena, California, who had taught at the seminary for close to 30 years. He and his wife ... who was a pastor in downtown Kitchener at the time ... had been part of the civil rights movement in southern California during the sixties.

Bob was a bit of an eccentric ... he wore socks with sandals ... even in the winter. But I can tell that he was an awesome pastor when he was in a congregation.

Bob began each class with a brief devotional... that was the paper that was handed out.

There were prayers and a reading, but main part of the devotional was the hymn we just sung ... done acapella by a couple of future pastors and spiritual care students.

After 16 weeks, My soul proclaims had become a favourite earworm.

The hymn is based on Mary’s words of joy in Luke’s gospel ... a joy we are called to share this morning and going out from this place into the world.

Mary rejoices in God’s work in her life and in the life of the world. Things will change ... she is sure of it.

In his gospel, Luke presents us with two pictures of how people respond to God's presence and call in their lives.

First, some context...

An angel came to Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, just before this morning's story.

Luke tells us that Zechariah was a priest and a righteous man and that Elizabeth was also righteous.

Zechariah is visited by an angel while he is in the sanctuary. Zechariah ... a man of faith ... is fearful at the sight of the angel next to the altar.

The angel tells him that Elizabeth will bear a son ... even though they are both getting up in years and she is barren.

He asks the angel, "How can I know that this will happen?" After all, Elizabeth is way past child-bearing age.

For having such doubts, the angel makes Zechariah mute. Zechariah cannot rejoice or proclaim what God is doing in the couple's life and how their child will prepare the people for the one who is to come. He cannot say his son will turn people back toward God.

As a priest, Zechariah is responsible for offering a blessing to the people gathered outside the sanctuary ... he cannot offer any blessing ... he cannot share the good news ... he can only offer hand gestures and silence.

Six months later, the angel comes to Mary ... greets her by telling her that she has found favour with God. The angel shares the news that she will bear a son named Jesus ... that her son "... will be great and will be called the Son

of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David."

Where Zechariah was afraid, Mary was confused ... perplexed is how we heard it this morning.

How can someone like her ... young, poor and single ... someone so vulnerable and insignificant in the sight of the world ... be favoured by God.

Mary doesn't doubt the angel's word, she doubts her worthiness.

"How can this be?" she asks.

The angel tells Mary that God makes all things possible ... even blessing her aged relative with a son.

The Greek word that is translated as "favoured" can also be translated as "grace."

Mary carries word of the grace-filled miracle to that relative ... Elizabeth. The women live at different ends of life ... but they share in the miracles of life.

God is doing great things in their lives and they recognize God's presence in one another. Even Elizabeth's baby, John, recognizes the wonder carried in Mary's womb and jumps for joy.

John is the miracle after the ending; Jesus is the miracle before the beginning.

One scholar wrote that this episode between Elizabeth, Mary, John and Jesus was the first gathering of a community of Jesus.

The wonder of the moment is cause to rejoice ... Elizabeth blesses Mary ... and Mary's child will be a bless the world.

Mary gives song to her joy that God is doing wondrous things in the life of the world. The values and practices of the world will be wiped away and the structures of the world will be turned upside down.

The lowly will be raised up ... the powerful brought down from their thrones.

It is a song, theologian Marilyn McCord Adams says that shows God takes our self-offerings, all that we have and all that we are, lifts them up on heaven's altar, sanctifies us with Holy Presence, makes us partners, co-workers, collaborators with God.

In short, we are to be partners in joy and in love.

Like Elizabeth and Mary in their pregnancies, we live in an in-between time.

During Advent, we are both expecting and rejoicing at the same time, we look toward the darkness of the world while also looking toward Bethlehem and the life that will come at the manger.

Despite our differences between each of us here ... young and old ... man and woman ... outgoing and reserved ... we are all expecting and rejoicing.

We are expecting the light breaking into the world and we are all rejoicing the promise that light holds for our lives.

How do we respond to that promise?

Do we rejoice and join in Mary's joyous song? Do we get lost in the

beauty of the music and miss the radical message it carries out to the world ... a radical message of hope for those cast aside and at risk of being forgotten?

And hope is one of the threads wove through Advent and through the gospel.

It is a hope we carry out in the form of God's unconditional love ... God's grace. We carry it to the homeless and women's shelters ... to the individuals to whom we minister ... even if it is just giving ear to their story.

Advent is a time of waiting ... of anticipating ... of transformation ... but can we ... like the unborn John ... recognize Christ when he is near us? Can we feel that same sense of joy and be transformed by it? Can we transform a world that still measures a person's life by a different scale?

Like Mary ... like Elizabeth ... we have each received the gift of God's grace. ... we are each favoured ... and we are each called to make God's presence known in the life of the world ... in other words ... to be a blessing for others.

To lift those brought low ...

To feed the hungry ...

To walk humbly ...

To comfort those in pain or fearful ...

To be with the lonely ...

To be a community whose foundation truly is love and to rejoice always in that love.

In those moments ... when that love is shared ... we ... like the baby John ... feel the Spirit jolt us ... experiencing the same joy that Mary felt in God's presence.

Through the gift of grace through our being favoured ... we are called to be a means for the Holy ... for God ... to break into the life of the world ... to carry love into the darkness and illuminate the way ... to show that God favours all and through grace the world's values will be upended.

And that my friends is cause to rejoice.

AMEN

Lord's Prayer

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 Ancient One,
enthroned,
the Crucified One, now
risen,
the Indwelling One,
poured out,

✠ bless you now and forever.

AMEN

EVEN MORE ANNOUNCEMENTS...

We are in the process of reviewing and updating our membership records. If you would like a visit from Pastor Chris, please call the church office and leave a message. Pastor Chris would be happy to visit and bring you communion, if you have difficulty attending church services.

