

Morning Prayer

The Second Sunday of Advent, Year B

December 6, 2020

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85887946777?pwd=eig4MEdsMUh6clV6b2dUblFOQ3I2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 858 8794 6777

Passcode: stb

Prelude

Announcements

The Lighting of the Candle

Presider: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People's Respondent: **Thanks be to God.**

Presider: Let us pray.



Lord Jesus Christ, in your resurrection you appeared as the Morning Star that knows no setting: Dawn upon the darkness of the human heart so that the darkness of this world may be overcome and your whole creation made new; for with the Father and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The number of candles is now lit according to the week of Advent, as the following is said:

God of hope, when Christ our Savior appears
**may he not find us asleep or idle,
but active in his service and ready for joy.**

Come, O Emmanuel,

You are the way, the truth and the life;

Come, living Savior,

come to your world, which waits for you. Amen

Opening Sentence

The Officiant says

Watch, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning, lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. *Mark 13:35, 36*

Opening Hymn

Hymnal 444

Blessed be the God of Israel



1 Blessed be the God of Is - rael, who comes to set us free;
2 He from the house of Da - vid a child of grace has given;
3 On pri - son - ers of dark-ness the sun be - gins to rise,



he vis - its and re - deems us, he grants us lib - er - ty.
a Sa - vior comes a - mong us to raise us up to heaven.
the dawn - ing of for - give - ness up - on the sin - ner's eyes.



The pro - phets spoke of mer - cy, of free - dom and re - lease;
Be - fore him goes his her - ald, fore - run - ner in the way,
He guides the feet of pil - grims a - long the paths of peace.



God shall ful - fill his prom - ise and bring his peo - ple peace.____
the pro - phet of sal - va - tion, the har - bin - ger of Day.____
O bless our God and Sa - vior, with songs that nev - er cease.____

Confession of Sin

The Presider says

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to set forth God's praise, to hear God's holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us keep silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by God's infinite goodness and mercy.

Silence is kept.

The People's Respondent, the Presider, and the People

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you**

**in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

The Priest says

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

The Invitatory and Psalter

Presider Lord, open our lips.

People **And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen. Alleluia.

Our God and Savior now draws near:
O come let us worship.

Venite: Psalm 95

Come, let us sing to the Lord; *

let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

**Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving *
and raise a loud shout to God with psalms.**

For the Lord is a great God, *

and a great King above all gods.

**In God's hand are the caverns of the earth, *
and the heights of the hills are his also.**

The sea is his, for he made it, *

and God's hands have molded the dry land.

**Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, *
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.**

For the Holy One is our God,

and we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of his hand. *

Oh, that today you would hearken to God's voice!

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

- ¹You have been gracious to your land, O LORD; *
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.
- ²**You have forgiven the iniquity of your people *
and blotted out all their sins.**
- ⁸I will listen to what the LORD God is saying, *
for he is speaking peace to his faithful people
and to those who turn their hearts to him.
- ⁹**Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him, *
that his glory may dwell in our land.**
- ¹⁰Mercy and truth have met together; *
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- ¹¹**Truth shall spring up from the earth, *
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**
- ¹²The LORD will indeed grant prosperity, *
and our land will yield its increase.
- ¹³**Righteousness shall go before him, *
and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

The Lessons

First Reading

Isaiah 40:1-11

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

- ¹“Comfort, O comfort my people,”
says your God.
- ²“Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD’s hand
double for all her sins.”
- ³A voice cries out:
“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
- ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

⁶A voice says, “Cry out!”
And I said, “What shall I cry?”
All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
“Here is your God!”

¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Canticle 11: The Third Song of Isaiah

Surge, illuminare

Arise, shine, for your light has come, *
and the glory of the Lord has dawned upon you.

**For behold, darkness covers the land; *
deep gloom enshrouds the peoples.**

But over you the Lord will rise, *
and his glory will appear upon you.

**Nations will stream to your light, *
and kings to the brightness of your dawning.**

Your gates will always be open; *
by day or night they will never be shut.

They will call you, The City of the Lord, *
The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Violence will no more be heard in your land, *
ruin or destruction within your borders.

You will call your walls, Salvation, *
and all your portals, Praise.

The sun will no more be your light by day; *
by night you will not need the brightness of the moon.

The Lord will be your everlasting light, *
and your God will be your glory.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Second Reading

2 Peter 3:8-15a

A reading from the Second letter of Peter.

⁸Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

¹¹Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? ¹³But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ^{15a}and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Hymn

Prepare the way, O Zion!

Hymnal 65



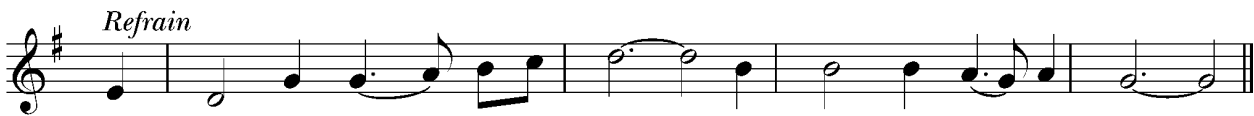
1 Pre - pare the way, O Zi - on, your Christ is draw - ing near!
 2 He brings God's rule, O Zi - on; he comes from heaven a - bove.
 3 Fling wide your gates, O Zi - on; your Sa - vior's rule em - brace.



Let ev - ery hill and val - ley a lev - el way ap - pear.
 His rule is peace and free - dom, and jus - tice, truth, and love.
 His tid - ings of sal - va - tion pro - claim in ev - ery place.



Greet One who comes in glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry.
 Lift high your praise re - sound - ing, for grace and joy a - bound - ing.
 All lands will bow be - fore him, their voic - es will a - dore him.



Refrain
 Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most ho - ly name.

Third Reading

Mark 1:1-8

A Reading from Mark.

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
 who will prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
 make his paths straight.’”



⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down

and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

The Apostles' Creed

The People's Respondent, the Presider, and the People

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth;
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

The Prayers

Presider The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Let us pray.

The People's Respondent, the Presider, and the People

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

V. Show us your mercy, O Lord;
R. And grant us your salvation.
V. Clothe your ministers with righteousness;
R. Let your people sing with joy.
V. Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;
R. For only in you can we live in safety.
V. Lord, keep this nation under your care;
R. And guide us in the way of justice and truth.
V. Let your way be known upon earth;
R. Your saving health among all nations.
V. Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;
R. Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.
V. Create in us clean hearts, O God;
R. And sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

The Collect of the Day

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

A Collect for Sundays

O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A Collect for Grace

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A Prayer for Mission

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Intercessions and thanksgivings

Presider Let us lift up our voices to God in strength, saying, Be patient with us and prepare us, Lord.

Intercessor Together as your Church, we long to see your face. Speak to us, Lord, as we walk through the wilderness listening for the sound of your voice. Give our leaders patience, wisdom, and a heart for your will: for our Bishops Bonnie, Michael, Justin, Julio, Moises, Elizabeth, Donald and Craig. We pray for all ministers, priests, deacons, ministry teams, those in formation; and our brothers and sisters worshipping at St Clare of Assisi, Ann Arbor, and St Michael's, Grosse Pointe Woods; and Holy Family, Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic. In your mercy, **be patient with us and prepare us, Lord.**

Silence is kept.

We pray for all who govern, especially Donald, our president, Joseph, our president-elect, and for the Congress and courts of this land. Guide the leaders of the nations as they work for the welfare of their people and the good of all. In your mercy, **be patient with us and prepare us, Lord.**

Silence is kept.

Awaken us to the suffering of people near us and those far from us. Call forth in us a spirit of generosity and kindness. Equip us to respond to their needs. Arouse in us a sense of urgency to demonstrate your Good News in our lives and voice it, that all may hear. Make us messengers of your love. In your mercy, **be patient with us and prepare us, Lord.**

Silence is kept.

We ask you to comfort those who have lost hope, who struggle with anxiety about the future, who live in fear. Bring healing to those for whom we now pray: [_____]. We pray for those who have died, [remembering _____], that their memories be blessings in our lives. In your mercy, **be patient with us and prepare us, Lord.**

Silence is kept.

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us. In your mercy, **be patient with us and prepare us, Lord.**

Prayers for those celebrating their birthdays and anniversaries

The Presider then says

In December, we celebrate the birthdays of Cynthia, Mike, Robert, and any others you wish to remember in prayer.

Prayer for a Birthday

BCP p.830

O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servants Cynthia, Mike, and Robert, as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Today we also celebrate the anniversaries of those you wish to remember in prayer.

Prayer for an Anniversary

BCP p.429

Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation, and giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have made, and for which your Son gave his life, and especially upon *this/ese* couple/s. Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may continue to grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their lives. **Amen.**

The Presider then says

In union, O Lord with the faithful at every altar of your Church, where the Holy Eucharist is now being celebrated, we desire to offer our praise and thanksgiving. We present to you our souls and bodies with the earnest wish that we may always be united to you. And since we cannot now receive you sacramentally, we beseech you to come spiritually into our hearts. We unite ourselves to you, and embrace you with all the affections of our souls. Let nothing ever separate us from you. **Amen.**

My brothers and sisters, I invite you- wherever you are- to take into your hands the gifts you offer today. Gifts of food, gifts of money, gifts of whatever form, and join me as we offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good our vows to the Most High.

Let us pray.

Loving God and merciful Creator, whose hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: we come to you with thanksgiving and praise. We offer to you this day our gifts of time, talent, and possessions, knowing that all we are, and all we have, is a gift from you. Please accept these gifts, and help us to reach out to others as you, our God, have reached out to us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A Prayer of St. Chrysostom

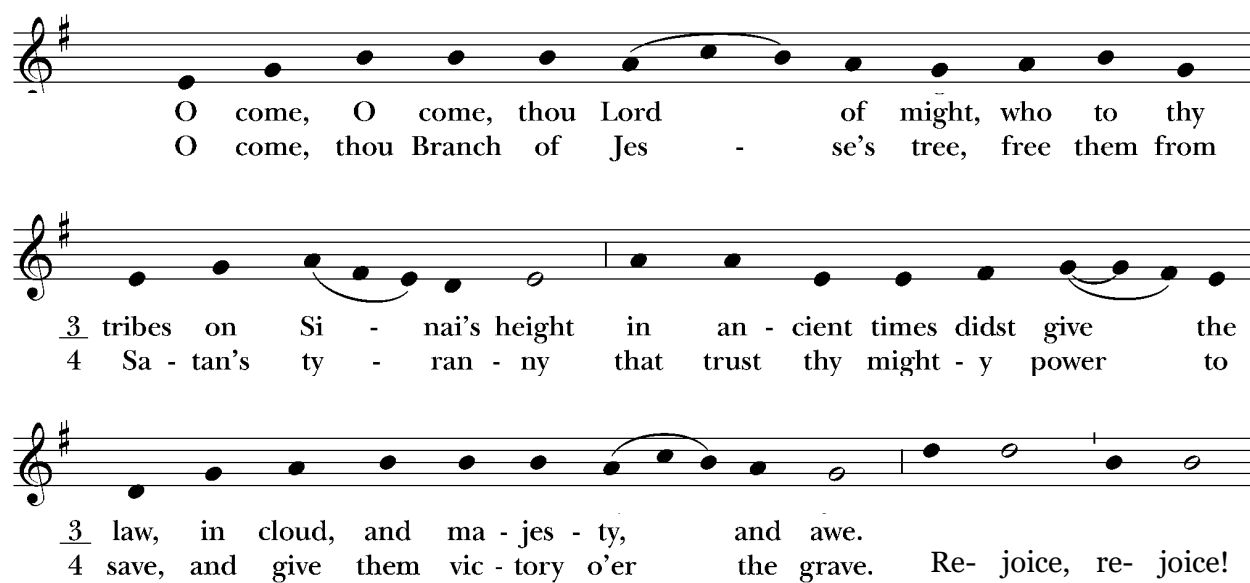
Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them:

Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen.

Concluding Hymn

Hymnal 56

O come, O come Emmanuel



O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy
O come, thou Branch of Jesse's tree, free them from

3 tribes on Si - nai's height in an - cient times didst give the
4 Sa - tan's ty - ran - ny that trust thy might - y power to

3 law, in cloud, and ma - jes - ty, and awe.
4 save, and give them vic - tory o'er the grave. Re- joice, re- joice!

Dismissal and Blessing

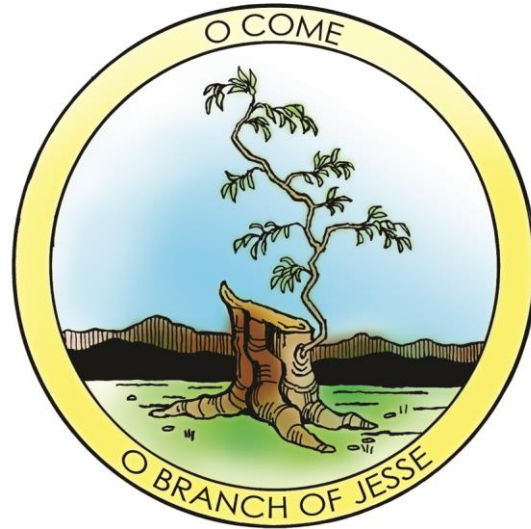
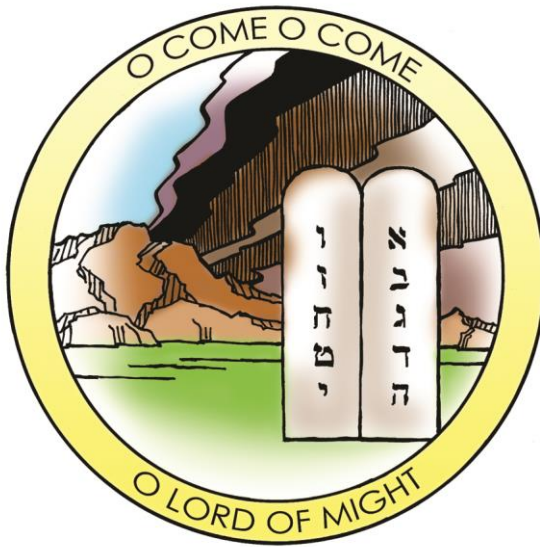
The priest blesses the people, saying

May our hearts be filled by our long-awaited Savior. May our community be graced with patient expectation. May Christ be with us in all the chaos. **Amen.**

May we learn to live in the Way of Emmanuel. May we have listening hearts, open minds, and generous spirits. **Amen.**

And may the blessing of God Almighty, ✚ the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

Postlude



REGARDING OFFERINGS TO ST. BARNABAS CHURCH

To make an offering to St Barnabas, please mail your check to the church: 20500 W Old US-12, Chelsea MI 48118-1309. Mail is being collected daily.

CONTINUING OUR DONATIONS OF FOOD AND FUNDS TO FAITH IN ACTION

Faith in Action is continuing to provide leadership in collecting donations to support households in need in the Chelsea and Dexter areas. They will be in need of our continuing help in the weeks of winter to come.

Needed right now: Shelf-stable groceries and financial donations; cleaning products and personal products are always needed, as these items cannot be purchased with food stamps. You may bring your donations to FIA, or to Nancy who will see that they get there.

If you bring food directly to FIA, please let Nancy know, so she can continue to keep our records of donation. Arrangements will be made for those who need to bring donations to the church; contact Nancy for details upcoming.

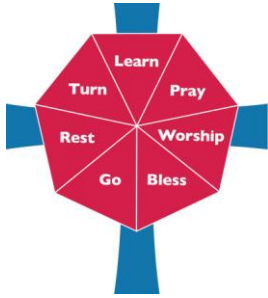
Donations to help us combat the continuing effects of the pandemic can be made by PayPal at www.faithinaction1.org, by Facebook, or by mailing a check to *Faith in Action, 603 S. Main Street, Chelsea MI 48118*. **If you need help, please call FIA at (734) 475-3305**

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Enrichment for Our Spiritual Journey

Compline: Night Prayer for Advent every Wednesday in Advent at 7:00 p.m.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81714578183?pwd=ZkhuMmoxTkh5No9nQ2V4SFlxeUMzQTo9> Meeting ID: 817 1457 8183 Passcode: 335034



The Way of Love material can be found here:

<https://episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love>

Join St Barnabas' twice-weekly Zoom check-in! Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. Contact Marion if you need the link.

Watch Washington National Cathedral's live-streamed Eucharist and Daily Office services, <https://cathedral.org/calendar/>

Join in a short, weekly, meditation with Presiding Bishop Curry here:

<https://episcopalchurch.org/habits-of-grace>

Watch Bishop Bonnie Perry's sermons, <https://www.edomi.org/whatsheaid/sermons/>

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Upcoming Commemorations

- Dec. 6 Nicholas of Myra, Bishop, c.342
- 7 Ambrose of Milan, Bishop and Theologian, 397
- 8 Richard Baxter, Pastor and Writer, 1691;
and, William West Skiles, Deacon and Missionary, 1862
- 9 Atilano Coco, Priest, 1936
- 10 Thomas Merton, Contemplative and Writer, 1968;
and Karl Barth, Pastor and Theologian, 1968.
- 12 Francis de Sales, Bishop, 1622; and, Jane de Chantal, Monastic, 1641



Advent 2B

December 6, 2020

**Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a;
Mark 1:1-8**

During Advent and Christmas, we will be using study prompts and other activities tied to the sermon for the week. Read the sermon aloud and follow-up with spoken responses to the two questions at the end. Find our full sermon compilation for individual, small group, or congregational use, *Sermons for Advent and Christmas 2020* at www.sermonsthatwork.org.

Pointing to Christ

by Michael Toy

The perennial challenge during Advent and Christmastime is to hear anew the familiar story we all know. We all know the story. We've all seen the Christmas pageants. We've set up the Nativity crèche with the holy family, cow, donkey, and shepherds. It's become almost too familiar. In part, that's why we have the season of Advent. These four weeks serve to prepare the way to Christmas via a bit of liturgical wilderness. The penitential season provides a time of reflection and contemplation so that we can hear the good news of Jesus' incarnation afresh and let the gospel sink more deeply into our lives.

This year is a bit different, to say the least. For many, this does not feel like the usual joyous march toward Christmastide. Hundreds of thousands around the globe will be spending their first Christmas without a loved one who has passed on due to the pandemic. Millions more will be attempting a celebration without their usual large and festive gathering, due to travel restrictions. For almost the entirety of the year, we have all been a people anxious and waiting in a lockdown-long Advent. And with no cure or vaccine, there is no clear path forward out of this dark season.

This has been a year full of novel experiences, and every little thing is cast in new perspective. And yet, while the harshness of wilderness may be felt more deeply this year, the same ageless truths remain constant. We are just able to see them more clearly. The fundamental truth of these wilderness seasons is that we are waiting on an imperfect and broken world to pass. The season of Advent reminds us that no matter who we are or where we are in time or space, all earthly things will come to an end.

Nearly 30 centuries ago, Isaiah wrote to God's exiled people, who were longing to return home. God's message to them is one of comfort. The Lord is coming. On first hearing, Isaiah's message hardly seems one of comfort: "The grass withers, the flower fades... surely the people are grass." That does not sound like a fairytale ending – and it's not. The comfort offered in these verses is more complex than a "happily ever after" coda. The comfort comes by putting things into a divine and cosmic perspective. All people will fade like grass, but God is mighty and endures forever. The goodness of God will prevail. The prophet does not give an immediate timeframe or an immediate solution to the heartbreak and suffering of the people in exile; what is offered instead is a message of hope for the future.

Second Peter is also written to a people longing for God's return. The author's message is not unlike Isaiah's: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire." All things will, in the end, pass away. And in the end, God's justice will prevail. While we don't know the exact date of its writing, we do know that this epistle was written to

the fledgling Christian community experiencing persecution at the hands of the ruling empire. They are looking for Jesus' return and immediate relief from their suffering. But God does not descend with thunder from the clouds in triumphant material salvation. Instead, God's word instructs the early Church to step back and seek a divine and cosmic perspective. A thousand years is like a day, and a day is like a thousand years to God. Again, this does not seem like a happy fairytale message for a people experiencing immediate pain and anguish. The author goes so far as to say that God's lack of thunderous return is not to cause more suffering but instead is an act of love and patience. Once again, we are given a word of hope for the future, but we are also given instructions on how to live in the present: "Strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish."

In our gospel reading, we read the very beginning of the Gospel of Mark. Without much prelude or fanfare, we are thrust into the action in the desert. The prophet John the Baptizer proclaims in the wilderness a familiar message. At this point in history, Israel has been invaded and occupied by the Roman Empire. And now John proclaims a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Though crowds flock to John—the reading says, "People from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him"—John still points away from himself and toward someone greater to come. John points to a hopeful future by promising one who will come baptizing, not with mere water but with the eternal Holy Spirit.

Our readings also show us that waiting is not a passive action. We are to live out our hope. In waiting for the fullness of the Kingdom of God, we proclaim God's message of justice. We name sin. We turn toward justice. We stand in the wilderness, pointing to the one more powerful than us. As the psalmist writes, "Righteousness shall go before him, and peace shall be a pathway for his feet." Where righteousness and peace are actively enacted, God is there.

Our Advent message from John the Baptizer is not to adopt a bug-and-honey diet or de-clutter the closet to make room for the camel skins. The message isn't even to level mountains or make a straight highway running through the desert! Our Advent message is that we are called to be a people that await the coming of the Lord. We are always in waiting—through victory and defeat, triumph and loss. It is certainly our job as the church to proclaim peace on earth, goodwill towards all, and joy to the world. But it is just as much our job to be visible in the wilderness, naming injustice, oppression, and apathy as sins. We name these things as sin not to cast judgment or humiliate or ridicule. And least of all do we name sin in order to exclude people from our "in" group; it is precisely the opposite. We stand in the wilderness and welcome all to journey with us in the power of the Holy Spirit. We point to something better. We point to the Christ, the one who is more powerful, more patient, and more loving. We point to the Christ, the one who is to come.

This Advent, many of us are already in the wilderness. Let us step back and pray for a glimpse of the divine and cosmic perspective. We remember that all things here on earth are temporary and ephemeral, and we work to embody God’s patience and love here in this world. Let our lives be shaped by our hope in the truth that God is coming. As our collect says, let us live in such a way so that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

Michael Toy, an alumnus of Princeton Theological Seminary, has worked in Christian formation since 2013. He now spends his time writing, blogging, and trying to live out the radical call to love our neighbors.

1. There is a tendency in many cultures to paper over the revolutionary nature of Christmas with saccharine sentimentality, soft lights, and picture-perfect meals with picture-perfect families. Do these images impede or obstruct the joy of Christ’s coming among us? Do they enhance it or are they indifferent to it? Why?

2. How can you, like John the Baptist, point people toward Jesus Christ? Commit to an action this week in which you will proclaim the Good News of God in Christ in word *and* deed. Write that commitment below.

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Lighting of the Candle from Baptized for Life “Advent antiphons” 2020
Concluding prayer at the Intercessions adapted from *The Armed Forces Prayer Book*, 1951.
Dismissal prayer adapted from “Our Advent Prayer,” The Academy for Vocational Leadership, 2018.

Our Mission:

We seek to grow as diverse disciples of Jesus Christ,
and to serve Jesus by serving others
in the world, guided by the values of
Ancient Rites, Open Minds, and Affirming Hearts.



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