

December 6th Worship
2nd Sunday in Advent

Introduction to the Day

John calls people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord's coming. The reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.

Lighting the Advent Candle – A Light of Peace

We encourage you to find some form of Advent Wreath in your own home.

Today we light a candle of PEACE

We bask in the extraordinary glow of the PEACE that we find in Jesus Christ.

We wait for the coming Messiah at Christmas

A people in exile hear a word of comfort, a word of peace. Every low place is lifted, every crooked way straightened, every mountain brought down, every road smoothed. We are made perfect in God's sight.

This is Extraordinary PEACE

Let us carry this light of PEACE into the world for all to see.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Lesson – Isaiah 40:1-11

¹Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

²Speak 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.

Gospel – Mark 1:1-8

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.”

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

We often get our “wilderness” language mixed up. “In the wilderness” is an imagery we use often in the church. We often refer to this time of Advent as kind of a wilderness time. We frequently refer to the season of Lent as a wilderness time.

Wilderness happens often in scripture as well and is at the forefront of our texts for this day. But, there’s a difference. In Isaiah,

“a voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.

In Mark, quoting this passage from Isaiah,

“the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘prepare the way of the Lord.’”

Catch that? In Isaiah, “a voice cries out, ‘in the wilderness prepare the way.’” In Mark, “A voice crying out from the wilderness.”

Why does that matter?

Today we dwell on our theme of “Extra Ordinary” as we are in the midst of this Extra Ordinary Advent journey and what this means for us as people of faith, that we are given this extraordinary peace.

We’ve been in a wilderness journey as church for roughly nine months in the midst of pandemic. We’ve been wondering how we do what we’ve been called to do and how we be what we’ve been called to be as a church.

And, this wording difference between Isaiah and Mark matters because we so often think of it as this voice crying out from the wilderness. That in the wilderness we hear this call and it’s in the wilderness that this call happens.

But, Isaiah is sending us into the wilderness for this work to happen. The prophet is saying, go out into the wilderness and prepare the way, go out into the unknown. Go out into the unsettled nature of the world. And prepare the way of the Lord.

And what about this is ExtraOrdinary peace? In fact, it seems like anything but peaceful, much like the contradiction of our ordinary and extraordinary, the definitions of those two things are the exact opposite.

What is peaceful about...

Go into the wilderness and prepare a place for the Lord.?

this time of unknown?

This bearded, camel clothed, locust and honey eating man screaming at us?

John the Baptizer, this recluse you might say, is far from peaceful. There is nothing seemingly peaceful about a man of his appearance screaming at people who were gathered that day.

But, he appeared in the wilderness. He heard the words of the prophet, Isaiah, and he went out into the wilderness to bring peace. "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

The ExtraOrdinary nature of this peace is that it is unsettling. We so often think of peace as this thing that comes over us.

I think of the peace I feel as I look in our sanctuary, with trees and beautiful lights currently set up in the front of the sanctuary, and the beauty of it all. It's one of the most peaceful places I can think of.

I think of the sun in the afternoon coming through the stained glass window on the east wall of the sanctuary. The light of those windows reaches all the way to the font. At the right time of day, it goes beyond the font and through the windows and out into the narthex of the church. It is peaceful. It stops me dead in my tracks. It reminds me of the light of hope and peace that is Christ in this season of the church.

This unsettling peace is bigger than just that. The prophet Isaiah,

"go into the wilderness and prepare the way of the Lord make straight in the desert, a highway for our God. The lowly will be lifted. Every valley lifted. Every mountain and hill made low. The uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a plain."

This is an unsettling peace that the lowly would be lifted and the powerful brought down. The crooked be made straight and the uneven are smoothed. This is an unsettling, extraordinary peace because in this peace we are brought to a level place.

And in this being brought to a level place in this extraordinary peace we are made perfect in God's sight. That is what is unsettling for us as people of faith, because we are people, we are human, and we think we are anything but perfect. We think that perfect is about as far away from us as anything. But, in the extraordinary peace of Christ that comes this Advent and Christmas season, we are indeed made perfect in God's sight.

The other thing we often do with these words is we hear what Isaiah says that "go in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord." There are two acting forces here. One is us. We hear these words and think it is something we need to do. We need to lift up the lowly and bring down the powerful, we need to straighten the crooked and smooth the rough.

The peace that comes from this is that it's God who brings down the powerful. It is God who lifts up the lowly and it is God who straightens those who may be deemed crooked. It is God who smooths the rough and levels the uneven.

The other words here are "be prepared."

What does it mean in this, to hear these words and to be prepared? What is it that we are to prepare?

The things that we need to prepare, that we often overthink, is ourselves. But beyond preparing ourselves, this is God calling us into a reconciliatory peace.

The valley lows and the mountain highs are our relationships.

The crooked paths and uneven places and rough roads are our relationships.

The wilderness that God speaks of through the Prophet Isaiah are our broken relationships. In calling us into an extraordinary peace, God in Jesus Christ – God through John the Baptizer – God through the Prophet Isaiah – is calling us into reconciliation.

Anybody who has ever had to say, “I am sorry – I’ve screwed up,” knows that this isn't easy. There is a period between realizing it needs to be said and saying it that is about as unsettling a period as they come.

It is painful.

It unsettles our inner being.

Everything we have learned and been trained to think as people is challenged in this period.

As we think of the mountain highs and the Valley lows and the crooked paths and the rough paths and the uneven roads...

We are unsettled.

We are shook.

But this sometimes-painful unsettling process brings us to an extraordinary peace.

It brings us to a level place.

People of God, this day, every day, this season of Advent, this life as people of faith, we are called - claimed - gathered - sent out into the wilderness to do this work., whether it's the wilderness of our own lives, whether it's the wilderness of society around us, whether it's the wilderness of our church, we are called into the unsettled nature of our relationships.

Because I know, you know, we all know that we have relationships to mend. And as we prepare during this season of Advent for Christmas, we are called into those places of wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.

People of God let us enter into a period of reconciliation. Let us push ourselves into the extra ordinary, into the wilderness of the world around us, into the unsettling nature and the painful processes that will bring us extra ordinary peace.

That is what God in Jesus Christ -

That is what God through the prophet Isaiah –

That is what God through John the Baptizer –

is calling us to do this day - to bring us to a level place.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN.

Nicene Creed

Prayers

God of power and might, comfort your people and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

Faithful God, you teach us to wait for you with faithfulness and patience. Sustain and support us in our doubts and questions. Nurture our faith as we discern and enact your mission. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Loving God, you set the stars in the sky and breathe life into the earth. Renew the face of creation where it is in need of your healing touch. Mend the wounds of environmental damage and restore balance to ecosystems so that all creation can declare your praise. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Steadfast God, you never tire of seeking justice. Where people suffer from discrimination, judgment, and injustice, speak words of truth and comfort. We pray especially for efforts within our church and within our community, to realize the completeness of the Body of Christ that God intended. Lead us toward a world where faithfulness will sprout underfoot and righteousness rain down from above. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Leading God, you ask us to make uneven ground smooth. Make even the disparities between your people. Sustain and support people with physical and intellectual disabilities. Accompany disability advocates who work for a world accessible to all. Teach us to celebrate the great diversity in our midst. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Tender God, you know sorrow and joy alike. We pray for those in our families and congregation who are not joyful in this holiday season. Comfort those who grieve, be a companion to all who are lonely, tend those who are sick or struggling with depression, and gather all people in your healing embrace. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Eternal God, we give thanks for the saints who have prepared your way in the wilderness and taught us to continue their faithful work. Make their generous lives an example for all. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Offering and Offertory Prayer

Our 4th Quarter Well Offering / Mission Offering:

Northwest Synod of Wisconsin and Lutheran Disaster Response.

Generous God, you have created all that is, and you provide for us in every season.

Bless all that we offer, that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing.

In the name of Jesus, Emmanuel, we pray.

Amen.

At Home Communion Liturgy

+WORDS OF INSTITUTION+

(Holding the bread) In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

(Holding the cup) Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.” When we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

(Tear the bread, share with each person – invite them to dip into the cup of wine/grace juice) +

LORD’S PRAYER +

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION +

Gracious and abundant God,

you have done great things for us, and we rejoice. In this bread and cup you give us life forever. In your boundless mercy, strengthen us and open our hearts to the world’s needs, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

BLESSING EACH OTHER +

(Using your pointer finger, dip it in the bowl of water, and make the sign of the cross on another’s forehead or the back of their hand)

“Child of God, marked as God’s own, Jesus loves you, and will love you forever. AMEN”

Take turns until each person has been blessed.

Blessing

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting,

the long-expected Savior fill you with love,

the unexpected Spirit guide your journey,

✠ now and forever. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Advent at Good Shepherd

Carport Communion NEXT Sunday, December 13th from 9:30 to 11.

Come for communion following worship and receive communion elements for At-Home Communion for the coming weeks.

Starting Monday, November 30, and going through Wednesday, December 23rd be a part of the Good Shepherd Extra Ordinary Community Secret Santa gift exchange

Purchase a gift and bring it to church Monday – Thursday between 8 am and 7 pm. When you drop your gift off, take the gift that is there. Along with your gift write a note to the recipient of your gift to brighten their holiday season. If bringing a gift is difficult for you, come and get a gift anyways, we will have extras.

Good Shepherd Christmas Boxes

Christmas Food Boxes will be happening this year, but it will look different. Instead of asking for food donations to be put into boxes and then delivered, we are asking for monetary donations to purchase boxes/gift cards. Those donations can be sent to the church office.