First Sunday of Advent - December 1st, 2024

Introduction to the Day

Advent is about the “coming days.” God’s people have always lived in great expectation, but that expectation finds specific, repeated enunciation in the texts appointed for these four weeks. The ancients anticipated a “righteous Branch to spring up for David.” The Thessalonians awaited “the coming of our Lord Jesus with all the saints.” Jesus’ contemporaries hoped for the time “to stand before the Son of Man.” With them we eagerly await the coming days: another Christmas celebration, a second coming, and the advent of Christ in word and supper.

**Greeting – The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

And also with you.

**Welcome**

**Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,

alive in the world,

reviving creation,

arriving soon.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God

and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

God of mercy,

**we confess that we have sinned.**

**We trust earthly powers and human authority alone.**

**We grow fearful. We cling to false comforts.**

God of might,

**we confess that we have sinned.**

**We have turned away from our neighbors.**

**We have trusted false promises.**

God in our midst,

**we confess that we have sinned.**

**We plead: come to us.**

**Bring your mercy to birth in us.**

**A righteous branch springs forth:**

**it is Christ the Lord, our Savior,**

**in whom we have forgiveness, life, and mercy.**

By the power of the Holy Spirit,

receive the grace and forgiveness of God

through ☩ Christ Jesus,

whose day draws near.

**Amen.**

**We light the advent candle bringing God’s light into a weary world.**

**We light the advent candle bringing our focus to the peace that is to come.**

**We light the advent candle bring ourselves to the stillness of hopeful anticipation.**

**Come Emmanuel.**

**Gathering Hymn “People, Look East” #248 vss 1-2**

**Prayer of the Day**

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection alert us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and redeem us for your life of justice, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**Reading - Psalm 25:1-10 We will read it responsively**

1 To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

 2 **My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.**

 3 Let none who look to you be put to shame; rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.

 4 **Show me your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths.**

 5 Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

 6 **Remember, O Lord, your compassion and love, for they are from everlasting.**

 7 Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O Lord.

 8 **You are gracious and upright, O Lord; therefore you teach sinners in your way.**

 9 You lead the lowly in justice and teach the lowly your way.

 10 **All your paths, O Lord, are steadfast love and faithfulness to those who keep your covenant and your testimonies.**

The word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel – Luke 21:25-36**

[Jesus said:] 25 “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

  29 Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

  34 “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

The Gospel of Our Lord.

Praise to you, O Chri**st.**

**Sermon**

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

It is always amusing to me that as we approach the end of the church calendar, which culminates on Reign of Christ Sunday, we start to get texts talking about the end times. And, on Christ the King Sunday we get the dialogue before Jesus and Pilate during his trial, and the reminder that Jesus’ Kingdom is not of this world, and what that means for us as people of faith that Jesus is a new understanding of what it means to be king.

And we put a bow on the church year, and flip the church calendar to a new church year ready to start fresh and right out of the gate what do we get? Jesus talking to his disciples about the end times. There will be great signs. Roaring seas and waves. People fainting from the fear of what has come of the world. The powers of the heavens will be shaken. AND THEN, the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and glory.

It is in the midst of this warning, the telling of the end times, that we celebrate Advent 1 that for us and for many is prescribed the theme of HOPE. If I am being honest the often optimistic person that I am could really do with a little less “it’s the end of the world as we know it” and a little more Louis Armstrong singing “What a Wonderful World.” Because, truth be told, talk of the world ending, and scripture pointing to it Sunday after Sunday is really starting to weigh on me, and perhaps you as well.

But here we are. In the face of what could be described as many of the signs that Jesus said would come, hearing the words of Christ himself to stand and be hopeful in spite of it all. “Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” He then tells them the parable of the fig tree. As sure as the tree blooms as a sign of summer coming, so too will these things certainly be a sign of the Kingdom of God coming near.

It would do us good to pause for a moment. And, in that pausing, take a moment to recognize that Pastoral Care maybe wasn’t always Jesus’ strong suit. Not necessarily the non-anxious presence we often need when the storms of life swirl around us and we need a calming word. Jesus’ initial response is to tell his followers, “well, you knew all these things were going to happen, so deal with it.” Not really the comfort they needed! AND THEN, to add to it he has the gall to say, “and while all of these things will most certainly come to an end and this earth will pass away, my words will not pass away.” Just a touch on the nose from the Son of God there.

But that is where we find our hope. Resting on and in God’s word. Thankfully Jesus goes on from the less than non-anxious presence that he was to give us some form of action steps that we can take.

Be on guard. Don’t let your hearts be weighed down. Lord knows those moments are going to come where our hearts are, indeed, weighed down. Jesus isn’t saying that we shouldn’t let it happen or that we are in the wrong if we do. What he is saying is that we need to be aware of it. Take the break that you don’t think you can take. Step out of the unpeaceful to find the peace you don’t think exists.

The worries of this life are going to happen. They are inescapable. Jesus cautions us to find peace when we can, find stillness when we can, because that is what we need when the trap of life arrives. In those moments, when we are able to find them, Jesus encourages prayer. Why? Because prayer is relationship. That is what God in Jesus Christ longs for. To be in relationship with one another, and in that be in relationship with him.

Jesus calls us to find peace, stillness, and rest when we can SO THAT in those moments when the world around us seems to be crumbling, we are able to stand strong in the faith. Christ calls us to stand strong, holding tightly to those things that we profess to be true. This Advent season Jesus calls us to a peaceful, seemingly unattainable at times, stillness that restores our body, mind, and spirit in the promise of our own redemption that comes as the Christ Child at Christmas.

For all that will change around us, it is the everlasting love of God our Creator, who sent Jesus our redeemer, that stays the same and carries us through. That redemption is where we find our hope, in spite of all that we are told should make us hopeless, we are a hopeful people anyways.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

**Hymn of the Day “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” #257 vss 1, 3, 4**

**Apostle’s Creed**

**Prayers**

As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God’s presence.

*A brief silence.*

God of righteousness, your people live in hopeful expectation of your coming. Fill your church with renewed passion for our shared mission, and deepen our relationships with other Christians and other faith traditions in our local community and across the world. God, in the stillness,

**receive our prayer.**

God of the cosmos, all creation shows that your presence is near. Help us sense your goodness and love in the sun and moon, in sprouting leaves and bare branches, in the roaring sea and quiet breeze. God, in the stillness,

**receive our prayer.**

God of the nations, your reign extends over all principalities and powers. Give leaders and all in authority hearts for justice and peace. Encourage efforts to enact policies that benefit the common good. God, in the stillness,

**receive our prayer.**

God of change, you accompany us through life’s transitions. Be near to all who are changing jobs, moving, welcoming children, or facing the loss of loved ones. Sustain those who are ill or suffering. We pray especially for Becky, Dawn, *Grady and Jace, Matt, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Cherri, Peggy, John, Judy, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Dan and Sharon, Roger and MaryLee*. In times of change, remind us of your steadfast love. God, in the stillness,

**receive our prayer.**

God of community, your Spirit holds us together. Sustain our care for one another (*especially through [local ministries] supported by this congregation*). Inspire us to seek new ways to live together and to embrace the diversity of thought and identity in our communities. God, in the stillness,

**receive our prayer.**

God of memory, we give you thanks for faithful ones who have died (*especially*). Tend to our grief and sorrow with renewed trust in your promise of abundant and eternal life. God, in the stillness,

**receive our prayer.**

Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

**Peace**

**Offering**

**Offertory Prayer**

Creator God,

you made the whole world,

even the farthest stars,

and you draw near to feed us.

We praise you for these gifts of bread and wine.

Strengthen us with this food

that we may live in expectation

for the advent of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Sacrament of Holy Communion**

**Lord’s Prayer**

God feeds us with tender mercy.

Come to the table.

**Post Communion Prayer**

Generous God,

we thank you for the gift of life,

for the bread of salvation.

We thank you for coming among us,

for leading us into peace.

We thank you for showering us with mercy,

for sending us into the world.

Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us

as we feed the hungry in your name.

**Amen.**

**Sending**

Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.

**Okay! We will! Thanks be to God.**

And all of Good Shepherd said,

**“AMEN”**

**Sending Hymn “People, Look East” #248 vss 3-4**

**Blessing**

God of endings and beginnings,

God in the darkness and the light,

God, our hope for the journey,

☩ bless and keep you now and forever.

**Amen.**

