



THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

6 December 2020

John, the Advent prophet, called the people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing would get in the way of the Lord's coming. 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. In baptism God has made us sisters and brothers of the Lord Jesus. God has clothed us with the Holy Spirit, a fire to warm what is cold within us and to kindle our hearts with love. Fed by word and meal, we

go forth ourselves to prepare the way of the Lord by proclaiming the good tidings that Christ is coming.

Today the Church remembers St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, c.342.

+ GATHERING +

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross in remembrance of baptism.

P. In the name of the Father, + the Son and the Holy Spirit.

C. Amen.

P. As people called out of darkness, let us confess our sins and seek mercy from the God of justice and righteousness.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P. God of steadfastness and love

C. we confess that we love the works of darkness more than Your light. We have sought to satisfy our deepest longings through material things of creation rather than through You, our Creator. We are quick to judge others, yet we fail to see our own shortcomings. We ignore the cries of the poor and grow weary of working for justice. Restore us, O God; let Your face shine on us, that we may be saved. Amen.

P. With a heart full of mercy and compassion, God saves us, Christ, the dawn from on high, shines upon us, and by the light of the Holy Spirit guides our feet into the way of peace. In the name of Jesus Christ and by His authority, I declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins. Almighty God keep you in the grace of Christ Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Spirit + fill you with joy and hope.

C. Amen.

GREETING

- P. From the One Who was, and Who is, and Who is to come. Grace and peace be with you all.
C. **And also with you.**

KYRIE

- P. O Lord, have mercy and come to us.
C. **Come, Lord Jesus.**
- P. O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, spreading through all creation.
C. **Come and teach us wisdom.**
- P. O Adonai and Ruler of the house of Israel, Who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and gave him the Law on Sinai.
C. **Come with an outstretched arm and redeem us.**
- P. O Root of Jesse, standing as a sign before the peoples, to Whom the nations will do homage.
C. **Come quickly to deliver us.**
- P. O Emmanuel, our King and our Lawgiver, the anointed of the nations and their Savior.
C. **Come and save us, O Lord our God.**

HYMN OF PRAISE *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

Oh, come, strong Branch of Jesse, free Your own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Your people save and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- P. Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for Your only Son. By His coming give us strength in our conflicts and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C. **Amen**

+ WORD +

FIRST READING. Isaiah 40:1-11

In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet known as Second Isaiah announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. The Lord will deliver Israel in an exodus more magnificent than the exodus from Egypt. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of the Lord.

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.

³ A voice cries out:
"In the wilderness prepare the
way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a
highway for our God.

⁴ Every 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.

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

⁶ A voice says, "Cry out!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

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

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

⁹ Get 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!"

¹⁰ See, the LORD GOD comes with might,
and His arm rules for Him;
His reward is with Him,
and His recompense before Him.

¹¹ He 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.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM 85:1–2, 8–13

You have been gracious to Your land, O LORD;
You have restored the good fortune of Jacob.

²You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people
and blotted out all their sins.

⁸I will listen to what the LORD God is saying,
for You speak peace to Your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to You.

⁹Truly, Your salvation is very near to those who fear You,
that Your glory may dwell in our land.

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

¹¹Faithfulness 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.

¹³Righteousness shall go before the LORD
and peace shall prepare for God a pathway.

SECOND READING. 2 Peter 3:8–15a

This short letter is written to Christians who believed that Jesus would return very soon and were perplexed by His seeming delay. The author reminds the readers that the certainty of God's promise is more important than the timing and to anticipate Christ's coming through conduct dedicated to God.

But do 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. ⁹ The 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. ¹⁰ 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, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

¹¹ Since 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, ¹² waiting 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? ¹³ But, in accordance with His promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

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

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

HOLY GOSPEL: St. Mark 1:1–8

The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.

C. Glory to You, O Lord.

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

² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending My messenger ahead of You,
who will prepare Your way;

³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

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

⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And 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. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He 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. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

P. The Gospel of the Lord.

C. Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY *Comfort, Comfort Now My People*



1 "Com - fort, com-fort now my peo - ple; Tell of peace!" So says our God.
2 For the her-ald's voice is cry - ing In the des - ert far and near,
3 Straight shall be what long was crook - ed, And the rough-er plac - es plain!



Com-fort those who sit in dark - ness Mourn-ing un - der sor - row's load.
Call-ing us to true re - pen - tance, Since the King-dom now is here.
Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, As be - fits his ho - ly reign!



To God's peo - ple now pro-claim That God's par - don waits for them!
Oh, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way!
For the glo - ry of the Lord Now on earth is shed a - broad,



Tell them that their war is o - ver; God will reign in peace for - ev - er!
Let the val - leys rise to meet him, And the hills bow down to greet him!
And all flesh shall see the to - ken That God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.

Through Him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
He came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit
He became incarnate from the virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and His kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son He is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God of power and might, comfort Your people and come quickly to our weary world. Hear our prayers for the Church, the world, and all those are in need.

A brief silence.

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. Restore balance to the earth 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. Lead us toward a world where faithfulness will sprout underfoot and righteousness rain down from above. Hear us O God.

Your mercy is great.

We seek healing for all people who long for justice, freedom, and comfort. Sustain them in their time of need. Be with all who wait for You, who suffer in body, mind, or spirit (*especially*). 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 into Your healing embrace. We pray especially for Merv, Emily, Angie, Shirlee, Lynette, Bill and Karen Pohlen, Bill Ningen, Gail, Tom and Carol. 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, especially Nicholas of Myra. Make their generous lives an example for all and at the last, bring us together with them to our heavenly home. Hear us O God.

Your mercy is great.

We raise our prayers to You, O God, in the name of the One Who is, Who was, and Who is to come, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SHARING THE PEACE

OFFERING

If you have not signed up for electronic giving, you can mail your offering in to Bethel (P.O. Box 126, Porter, 56280), you may drop it in the offering box at the church, or you may make your offering online at our website (www.bethelofporter.com).

OFFERTORY PRAYER

- P. Let us pray. Lord God,
C. accept the offerings we bring this day, the work of our hands, the gifts of our labor, our lives to serve You. Gladden our hearts as we watch for Your coming and help us to share that joy with all the world. Amen.

+ MEAL +

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| P. The Lord be with you. | C. And also with you. |
| P. Lift up your hearts. | C. We lift them to the Lord. |
| P. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. | |
| C. It is right to give God thanks and praise. | |

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P. Holy God ... the Word made flesh.

C. Amen.

P. In the night ... in righteousness and peace.

C. Come, Lord Jesus.

P. Send Your Spirit on us ... one God, now and forever.

C. Amen.

THE 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.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

P. This is the body of the One Who was foretold by the prophets. This is the blood of Him
Who will return for you at the end of time.

C. Come to us now, O Lord, in the breaking of bread. Amen

DISTRIBUTION

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

P. The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace.

C. Amen.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER.

P. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we thank You for coming to us through the sacrament of this holy supper. May Your presence in our lives give us patience and peace in this holy season, and make us eager for Your return when You will bring all the faithful into Your heavenly kingdom; where You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C. Amen

+ SENDING +

BENEDICTION

P. In all your Advent preparations, remain watchful with your eyes on Christ, Whose birth in a manger is but a promise of His coming again in glory. And may the blessing of God, Father, + Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and forever.

C. Amen

CLOSING HYMN *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*



1 Come, thou long-ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
2 Born thy peo-ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king;



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king-dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art,
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir-it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



dear de - sire of ev - 'ry na - tion, joy of ev - 'ry long-ing heart.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

DISMISSAL

P. The coming of the Lord is near. Come, Lord, and do not tarry.

C. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The Kyrie written by The Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel

Those who Serve.

Ministers. All the People of God

Organist. Lou Knutson

Camera: Josh Sumption

Presiding. Pastor Munter

Reader. Craig Petersen

Projection: James Kamrath

How to reach us.

Church Office. 507-296-4658

Pastor's House. 507-296-4558

Pastor's Cell. 507-828-1000 (call or text)

Pastor's email. pastormunter@gmail.com

Bethel email. bethellutheran@frontier.com

Bethel web page. www.bethelofporter.com

November 29, 2020

General: \$1,359.75 (\$732.75 received through eGiving)

Includes: \$300.00 Thanksgiving Offering.

Savings: \$183.67 (\$43.67 received through eGiving)

Includes: \$163.67 in memory of Mavis Anderson: \$100.00 for Organ, \$63.67 undesignated. \$20.00 for Organ.

| | | Year: | 2020 | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|--|--|---|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | Total Budgeted Expenses: | \$ 103,919.70 | *Does not include the Hemnes share of the Parish Budget. | | | |
| | | Monthly revenue required to meet budget: | \$ 8,659.98 | | | | |
| Year to Date Actual Revenue and Budgeted Expenses Comparison- | | | | | | | |
| This report is based on budgeted expenses only, divided evenly for each month of the calendar year. Actual expenses per month vary greatly. This analysis is to be used as a guideline only and not a full representation of the full financial health of Bethel Lutheran Church. | | | | | | | |
| This report does not include revenues assigned to the Hemnes Lutheran Church portion of the joint parish budget or transfers from savings accounts that cover special, non-budgeted expenses. | | | | | | | |
| | Total Revenue for Month | Year to Date Revenue | Year to Date Budgeted Expense | Year to Date Difference: shortfalls shown as negative numbers | Cash Reserves Expended | Cash Reserves Repaid | Reserves Repaid Notes |
| January | \$7,965.95 | \$7,965.95 | \$8,659.98 | -\$694.03 | | | |
| February | \$4,163.24 | \$12,129.19 | \$17,319.95 | -\$5,190.76 | | | |
| March | \$8,867.00 | \$20,996.19 | \$25,979.93 | -\$4,983.74 | | | |
| April | \$8,572.27 | \$29,568.46 | \$34,639.90 | -\$5,071.44 | | | |
| May | \$16,334.85 | \$45,904.12 | \$43,299.88 | \$2,604.25 | | \$3,000.00 | Federal COVID Response Grant* |
| June | \$7,028.50 | \$52,932.62 | \$51,959.85 | \$972.77 | | | |
| July | \$3,832.84 | \$56,765.46 | \$60,619.83 | -\$3,854.37 | | | |
| August | \$6,590.74 | \$63,356.20 | \$69,279.80 | -\$5,923.60 | | | |
| September | \$3,552.25 | \$66,908.45 | \$77,939.78 | -\$11,031.33 | | | |
| October | \$4,830.00 | \$71,738.45 | \$86,599.75 | -\$14,861.30 | -\$3,000.00 | | |
| November | \$7,396.20 | \$79,134.65 | \$95,259.73 | -\$16,125.08 | | -\$3,018.00 | Federal COVID Response Grant* |



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Prayers of Intercession: Sundays and Seasons, lightly edited by Pastor Munter.

Wayfinding

When discouragement is so thick that we can’t see a way forward, what helps us to move once again? What can rekindle our hope? God led the Israelites out of Egypt the long way around. When we can’t see ahead, we may need a voice that creatively pulls us outward, or backward.

The earliest generations of Christians, like their enslaved and exiled ancestors, were surrounded by self-congratulatory nonsense. The Roman world was awash in announcements of the “good news” of imperial victories, favors, and festivals. One widely copied text celebrated the birthday of “our God” Caesar as “the beginning of good news for the world because of him.” Gospel writers reached outward to take up the Roman empire’s language and bend it. The title of Mark’s gospel, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” took something familiar and made it startlingly new.

God led the Israelites out of Egypt through the sea. Centuries later, the prophet Isaiah reached back to that story to proclaim a new exodus, out of Babylon through the desert. And centuries later, John the Baptist reached back to Isaiah’s fulfilled promises to say a new thing. “All” the people of Jerusalem and people from the “whole” countryside responded. That’s a lot of people! Whatever their numbers, they could act knowing that they were not alone. Community provided comfort and strength. Those who broke routine to trek out to the desert, confess their sins, and be plunged into the River Jordan were retracing the routes of their ancestors by going back to the waters and symbolically crossing again—together.

In Advent, our countercultural season, we also reach out and reach back. Together we begin our church year by returning to the beginning of our life in faith: holy baptism. In Isaiah and Mark we hear voices speaking comfort, crying out, heralding good tidings. And then, even in wilderness, we begin to find and make a way.

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