

As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present. May we together experience the presence of God

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We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord

Prelude

Welcome



“Come Home for Christmas”

Worship Series

Week 1

So, what do we do when we get ready to go home? We make lists. We put things in order. We set our minds on our destination. What is our destination? Our destination is home. So now we begin to prepare.

First, we prepare with Light, of course, because light is crucial to Advent. We light the candles on the wreath, not to count down to Christmas, but as a beacon to call us home. “We’ll leave the light on for you” isn’t just a slogan for a hotel chain, but a gospel promise that we will find our way by the light that is Jesus the Christ and now is reflected in the body of Christ, the church.

The first Sunday of Advent, or the Sunday of hope in some traditions, or the prophecy candle in others, is the reminder that it is time to head home.

As we gather today, we begin with the words of Jeremiah

MEDITATION FOR GATHERING

The Day is Surely Coming
(Jeremiah 33:14-16)

A day, certain and on its way,
And we feel it approaching
Slowly first, then in a quickened pace
Like a promise on its way
To being fulfilled

A day when justice and righteousness
Is executed as surely as the day breaks
Sun shines, rain falls, fog gathers
At foothills

A day is certainly coming
Sure as breath
A day of safety

A name of a Holy One
On the lips: Branch
Righteous One
Hope

Certainly on its way
And as we prepare
We light the candle
Of hope.

A Call to Worship

Dr. Derek C. Weber, Director of Preaching Ministries, Discipleship Ministries of the UMC

Pastor: Something stirs deep within us – a longing, a hope,

People: A thirst for joy, a hunger for peace, a yearning for blessing.

Pastor: We know deep within that our hopes and fears

People: Will be met by angel songs and baby sighs.

Pastor: It is Advent -

People: Season of waiting, hoping, yearning.

Pastor: Advent -

All: Time to go home.

PRAYER REFLECTION

(based on Luke 21: 25-36)

Written by Anne Osdieck, and posted on The Center for Liturgy Website of Saint Louis University, <http://liturgy.slu.edu>. Reposted: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2012/11/gospel-reflection-luke-21-25-36.html>.

**But when these signs begin to happen,
stand erect and raise your heads.**

We shudder at signs we see.

Anxieties bombard us.

**Our hearts are
afraid.**

Lord,

Let us be vigilant, hold our heads high.

**Make us an Advent people
with hope as our
stronghold.**

Jesus,

You once came into our world with all its sorrows.

**Keep us awake and alert to your presence
in the midst of our struggles now.**

**Tell us again that your love
will triumph.**

WORDS OF ASSURANCE FROM JEREMIAH 33:14-16

God fulfills God's promises.

Marilyn E. Thornton, The Africana Worship Book for Year C (Discipleship Resources, 2008), 157.

We may not know the time, but the days are surely coming when righteousness, justice, and safety will abide in our communities.

The days are surely coming when God will execute Shalom: love, peace, health, and well-being for the people who walked in darkness.

The days are surely coming when there is a cure for AIDS, when every gun will be beaten into tools for rebuilding, when every child will have the opportunity to develop God-given gifts, and when every adult will see every child as a gift from God.

The days are surely coming when no city will fear the hurricane, no country will fear nuclear bombs, no tribe will fear annihilation by another, and no person will fear another because God chose to create all people in the diversity of God's image.

God fulfills God's promises, and the days for fulfillment are surely coming.

Praise Hymn #196 Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

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Come, thou long-expected Jesus born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born they people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
By thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.

We Hear God's Word

Gospel Reading..... Luke 21:25-36 (NRSV)

The Coming of the Son of Man

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."

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

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.

Exhortation to Watch

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 word of God for the People of God, **Thanks Be to God**

Children's Message

Faith Hymn #3048 View the Present Through the Promise

View the Present through the Promise/Words Thomas H Troeger Music Trad. Welsh melody; harm. By Luther Orlando Emerson Words © 2004 Oxford University Press, Inc. assigned 2010 to Oxford University Press, Used from The Faith We Sing © 2003 Abingdon Press, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE #736621-A. All rights reserved. "Permission to podcast / stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License #736621-A. All rights reserved

View the present through the promise, Christ will come again.
Trust despite the deepening darkness, Christ will come again.
Lift the world above its grieving through your watching and believing
in the hope past hope's conceiving: Christ will come again.

Prove the present with the promise, Christ will come again.
Let your daily actions witness, Christ will come again.
Let your loving and your giving and your justice and forgiving
be a sign to all the living: Christ will come again.

Match the present to the promise, Christ will come again.
Make this hope your guiding premise, Christ will come again.
Pattern all your calculating and the world you are creating
to the advent you are waiting: Christ will come again.

Meditation

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

(inspired by Jeremiah 33:14-16)

O God, the days are surely coming when all your promises will be fulfilled to your faithful children. We pray for the church that we might fulfill our promises to you, and be forgiven for all our failures.

Come Lord Jesus, and hear our prayer.

In your time, O Lord, a righteous branch sprang up and you brought justice and righteousness in every land. We pray for our nation, and all nations, that your peace would be manifest in every corner of the earth.

Come Lord Jesus, and hear our prayer.

In your Kingdom, O Lord, you bring your people safety and comfort. We pray for the sick, the suffering, and those in distress of any kind (especially . . .); that you would heal all injuries, comfort all grief, and settle all wrongs.

Come Lord Jesus, and hear our prayer.

Your great works of redemption, O God, span the ages. We pray for those who rejoice this week (as they celebrate their birthday, and anniversaries that they might be filled with joy and gladness.

Come Lord Jesus, and hear our prayer.

In the fullness of time, O God, you sent your son, to be born of our sister Mary. And his name was Emmanuel: God With Us. We thank you for your Presence with us, and we pray that you might be always present with those whom we love but see no longer.

Come Lord Jesus, and hear our prayer.

Come among us O God, and hear our prayers; so that when your Son Jesus comes among riding on a cloud and with great power and might, we might come to adore him as we will all unite in the prayer He taught us to pray, Our Father...

Departing Hymn # 3050 Until Jesus Comes

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Until Jesus comes, until Jesus comes,
I'll be watching and waiting until Jesus comes.
Until Jesus comes, until Jesus comes,
I'll be watching and waiting until Jesus comes.

Until Jesus comes, until Jesus comes,
I'll be watching and waiting until Jesus comes.
Until Jesus comes, until Jesus comes,
I'll be watching and waiting until Jesus comes.

SENDING FORTH: Faithful God, our normal rhythm is rushing. We are thankful for this season of Advent as a reminder to pause, wait, and anticipate your miraculous ways that are often found in unexpected places. May we pay attention this week to signs of your coming kingdom. Amen.