

Second Sunday of Advent

December 5, 2021

Racine UMC & Sumner Center UMC

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

Christmas is approaching. Sometimes there is a joy in the waiting, like counting down the days before vacation or a party. Other times, it feels like that snowball rolling down a mountain that is going to swallow you up before you can get out of the way.

It's easy to slip into that mode, to recognize that there is much to do before Christmas gets here. We've got to move heaven and earth; we've got to shovel out; we've got to clear the path. That is why John the Baptist seems to fit in so well with the Advent season. There is threat aplenty in the early part of the Gospel of Luke. Sometimes, we'd like to skip over John's tirade and get on to the angels and the baby and the sheep. But no, let's pause and listen in again: "Prepare the way of the Lord!" (Luke 3:4.)

The point here is that there is work to be done: getting-ready work; opening-up work; pulling-the-kinks-out kind of work.

And lest we think this is easy work, if we look at the book of Malachi we see it jump up there at the back end of the Old Testament and says, "Hang on! You think this is going to be a picnic? You think this is a walk in the park?" Not a chance. "See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me . . . But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?"

Who can endure? Would we? Do we measure up – even to our limited expectations, let alone to all that God intends for us to be? Who can endure that kind of scrutiny? Who can measure up? Who can stand when the refiner comes; when the purifier shows up?

But wait, tucked away in this passage is a glimmer of hope in the midst of the call to cleanliness, in the midst of the warning or the threat. There is a little, almost hidden promise in these words from Malachi to which we need to pay attention.

Malachi says that God is willing to be with us throughout the process. Malachi says that God is willing to hurt for our salvation, for our purification. Malachi says that God is willing to endure the fire that we might be made whole. Malachi says that we can endure because God endures with us. Hope. We are not alone.

Maybe "Christmas is closer than you think" isn't a warning after all. Maybe it shouldn't make us feel more frenzied, feel more behind, more afraid we won't be ready in time.

Maybe that phrase ought to be a promise, a comfort. Maybe it ought to be an assurance that we are not alone in this season of Emmanuel because God is with us. Maybe it ought to be a means by which we can overcome the fear of going home.

Christmas is closer than you think! Praise God.

Today we light these candles, the candle of hope and the candle of peace, as a sign of our assurance that though the road is hard, we believe it is worth the journey. It is time to go home.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Rev. Dr. Derek C. Weber, Director of Preaching Ministries, Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church, June 2021.

O come, O come, Immanuel,

And be light for our darkness.

Be comfort in our grief, be a friend for our loneliness,

An oasis for our searching.

O come, O come, Immanuel,

Restore our joy, heal our wounds, and bring us peace.

ADVENT PRAYER

God in this season

suspended between hope and fulfillment,

let us never forget what you have done.

May we be overwhelmed by your mercy,

which flows in wave after wave.

May we be honest about the darkness within us,

and perceptive of the light around us.

May we make straight the path for the Lord,

that together we may see God's glory revealed.

Praise Hymn #211 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

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**1 O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.**

Refrain:

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

**2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go. Refrain**

**3 O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe.**

Refrain

**4 O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem,
unto your own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.**

Refrain

We Hear God's Word

Gospel Reading..... Luke 1:68-79

New Revised Standard Version

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
69 He has raised up a mighty savior[a] for us
in the house of his servant David,
70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
71 that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.
72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us 74 that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
78 By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon[b] us,
79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Word of God, for the People of God, **Thanks be to God!**

Children's Moments

Faith Hymn #209 "Blessed Be the God of Israel"

Author: Michael Perry (1973) Publication Date: 1989

Composer: Hal H. Hopson (1983) Copyright: Music © 1983 Hope Publishing Co.

**1 Blessed be the God of Israel, who
comes to set us free, who visits and
redeems us, and grants us liberty. The
prophets spoke of mercy, of freedom
and release; God shall fulfill the
promise to bring our people peace.**

**2 Now from the house of David a child
of grace is given; a Savior comes
among us to raise us up to heaven.
Before him goes the herald, forerunner**

**in the way, the prophet of salvation, the
harbinger of day.**

**3 On prisoners of darkness the sun
begins to rise, the dawning of
forgiveness upon the sinner's eyes, to
guide the feet of pilgrims along the
paths of peace;
O bless our God and Savior with songs
that never cease!**

Meditation

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Almighty and all-loving God,
through your Son Jesus Christ
you have reconciled the world to yourself.
Help us now to be reconciled with one another,
that again we might dwell in the warmth of your love.
Inspire us with your Holy Spirit
to put aside the cloak of pride and put on Christ,
that we might forgive and be forgiven;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

DECLARATION OF PARDON

Pastor: Friends, hear the good news! Christ has entered into heaven.

People: Christ now appears in the presence of God on our behalf.

Pastor: Friends, believe the good news!

People: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

“The Great Thanksgiving for Advent,”

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The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
Father Almighty creator of heaven and earth.
You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life.
When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.
You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God,
and spoke to us through your prophets, who looked for that day
when justice shall roll down like waters
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream,
when nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ,
whom you sent in the fullness of time to be a light to the nations.
You scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts
and have mercy on those who fear you from generation to generation.
You put down the mighty from their thrones and exalt those of low degree.
You fill the hungry with good things, and the rich you send empty away.
Your own Son came among us as a servant
to be Emmanuel, your presence with us.
He humbled himself in obedience to your will
and freely accepted death on a cross.
By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection
you gave birth to your Church,
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread,
gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ,
one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church,
all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father (God), now and forever. **Amen.**

PASTORAL PRAYER

Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant, Almighty God, that all who confess your Name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations, in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honor one another and serve the common good.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and glory.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours, and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love one another as he loves us.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles, and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

We commend to your mercy all who have died, that your will for them may be fulfilled; and we pray that we may share with all your saints in your eternal kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

O merciful God, we come to you this day and join our prayers with the One who stands before you in heaven, Jesus Christ our Lord – Our Father ...

***Departing Hymn #419 "I Am Thine, O Lord"**

Author: Fanny J. Crosby (1875)

Composer: William H. Doane (1875)

Publication Date: 1989

1. I am thine, O Lord, I have heard thy voice, and it told thy love to me; but I long to rise in the arms of faith and be closer drawn to thee.

Refrain:

Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, to the cross where thou hast died.

Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, to thy precious, bleeding side.

2. Consecrate me now to thy service, Lord, by the power of grace divine; let my soul look up with a steadfast hope, and my will be lost in thine.

(Refrain)

3. O the pure delight of a single hour that before thy throne I spend, when I kneel in prayer, and with thee, my God, I commune as friend with friend!

(Refrain)

4. There are depths of love that I cannot know till I cross the narrow sea; there are heights of joy that I may not reach till I rest in peace with thee.

(Refrain)

A Peaceful Benediction

Be people of peace.

Let peace live in your heart and share the peace of Christ with all you meet.

Share peace by acting out of compassion and not fear.

Share peace by listening to all sides of the story.

Share peace by praying for our world.

In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share peace.

As you go out into the wonder of God's creations, share peace and hope with those you meet. Amen.