

Advent #3

12-12-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Christ’s presence in our midst in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of the God in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one ‘more powerful’ than John, even with a winnowing fork in hand, is good news – and cause for exultation – for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Prepare the Royal Highway”](#)

Psalmody: Isaiah 12:2-6

“Behold, God is my salvation;

I will trust, and will not be afraid;

for the Lord God is my strength and my song,

and he has become my salvation.”

³With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. ⁴And you will say in that day:

“Give thanks to the Lord,

call upon his name;

make known his deeds among the nations,

proclaim that his name is exalted.

⁵“Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;

let this be known^[a] in all the earth.

⁶Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,

for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

Hymn of Praise: [“Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, Our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever Jesus. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Zephaniah 3:14-20](#)

2nd Reading: [Philippians 4:4-7](#)

The Gospel: [Luke 3:7-18](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“O Come, O come, Emmanuel”](#)

(The third week’s Angel Tree results will be sent later today)

The Message: [\(Video Link\)](#)

It is difficult to believe but today is already the third Sunday in Advent – the hands of time keep moving forward regardless of our need to slow them down. We may find ourselves in the situation of so much to do and so little time to do it. Regardless of our circumstances Christmas will be here in short order whether we are totally ready or not. It will come regardless of the pandemic, of any news of the day – either good or bad, - regardless of our politics, or even our particular circumstance in life. Regardless the days will exhaust themselves and December 25th will be a reality and we will experience the Christmas for which we have prepared.

In an all too real way this is the experience of life itself. The years fly by as if they were days and all too often they become consumed by the negative circumstances which may surround us. We may even become so lost in them that we never are able to find the time to help overcome them. We may never come to terms with how we may make a difference. This is the case when we fall into the trap of being so overwhelmed with large problems and are not able to see that these problems are the result and accumulation of individual problems and needs. In frustration we may just throw up our hand and say it’s impossible.

At this point we need a little Advent in our lives. Advent takes us through the process of stepping back and honestly evaluating our lives in relation to the Nativity message. The result is that we begin to look upon life with a different perspective and are able to begin to focus on what is important. It is then that we begin to see Advent in our everyday lives for it is the preparation for that which is to come. This means that there is always that future goal for which we prepare and strive. Therefore the fruition of Advent does not end with the celebration of the Nativity but is how we continually renew the message of the incarnation, the Good News in the proclamation of the Angel that night long ago.

Of course what the Angel’s proclamation was referring to is that which is our ultimate hope as found in this promise, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” This is the ultimate message of advent for our lives. But, it is not enough to come to the manger and celebrate a birth. It is not enough to go say that “I am a Christian.” Life is full of meaningless words. Listen to John the Baptist’s message in our gospel lesson this morning, “John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’”

In this John clearly points out to the Jewish crowd that it was not enough to say they were followers of Abraham or to say they were Jews. He could have said this much later on to the followers of Jesus. To only pay lip service leads to a dead end street. There is no hope in that. "...every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Let's take this one step further. To only experience Advent as preparation to celebrate a holiday leads to a dead end street for it lasts for just a day or two and then is just a memory. Life goes on being consumed by the latest unwanted news ending in despair.

John though doesn't end with a message of doom and gloom for he makes the transition from a message of repentance to what the outcome of being repentant means. He vividly make the transition from Advent to what it means to celebrate the Nativity, the Birth of Christ, the meaning of the angel's proclamation of "Good news of great joy."

Being confused by what John had said the crowd then asked him "What then should we do?" His reply was to live what you say you believe. "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" ¹³ He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." In principle this was the same reply that Jesus gave to the ruler who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life? Although the ruler said he had kept all of the commandments, Jesus' reply was, "There is one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

Both John and Jesus were saying that just playing lip service to what you say you believe falls way short of the good news of God's love. It falls short of being able to celebrate Christmas beyond the traditional trappings. This is why a true and honest evaluation of how we are preparing for the true meaning of Christmas is so necessary during these weeks leading up to the celebration of the Nativity. The message of Advent is the message which gives life for the meaning of repentance brings us to the doorstep of knowing God's love and forgiveness

Coming to this doorstep just may make our preparation for Christmas more meaningful this year for it can bring comfort to a troubled and saddened people. It is then that it becomes the season to rejoice as Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say Rejoice." But rejoice amidst such troubling times? I believe the answer is yes if Christmas is the result of repentance and renewed commitment to the message of life and hope of the Good News that the Angel proclaimed. This rejoicing occurs when our lives take on that message as Paul stated, "Let your gentleness be known to everyone." We especially need to hear this message now. We need to know that we are capable of living beyond the problems of life. We need to know that we can make that difference. We can make a difference to those who are in desperate need of those necessities which can sustain their lives. With each angel on the Angel Tree we do this.

Paul then gives us the hope which we need to hear. The Lord has not abandoned us. Not at all for "The Lord is near" as this gentleness of God's love is lived. With this presence then we know that we do not have to worry for God's overwhelming will overcomes the burdens and tragedies of life. Paul wrote, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving your requests be made known to God." The question then becomes are we prepared to be a vital part of God's response? Are we able and willing to rely on God's love and His presence to help us through our needs? Advent is not only that time to prepare for Christmas, the Nativity, but is that time of preparation so that when we are confronted with any tragic news or circumstances we are prepared to be that witness to the gentleness of spirit of God's love.

Advent and Christmas will come and go but this year they can live on as the time when life finds the necessity to not only celebrate God's love but to live it. We must come to the realization when Christmas is more than just a holiday and when we as a nation and as individuals can begin to redirect our values in life. Then we will realize Paul's blessing, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." This is the message which we need to hear for it is a message which brings healing and with this healing comes hope. This hope finds reality within ourselves with the willingness to change, a willingness to receive the peace of God. Within this peace we then can celebrate the joy of the Nativity throughout the year knowing that we are actively sharing the love of God with those who need what we have to give. The message of Christmas gives us the power to do this through God's love given to us through the good news of the Nativity.

Anthem: ["Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" A young Agne G.](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Loving Father, with the celebration of the Nativity quickly approaching, life with its tragedies reminds us of how precious life is. Let us give pause not only to pray for those who have been affected by disaster but to extend a helping hand wherever possible. To be that helping hand will bring new meaning to our celebration of Christmas and give us pause to be joyful for the good news of the Nativity. May the cause for this celebration be a reality in our lives throughout the year. We give you thanks that you have given us life to be share in love with each other.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, Kraig

Greff, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family,, Della, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack,
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers"](#)

Announcements

All services are being held indoors in the sanctuary. Masks and social distancing is required.

Piano Recital Sunday December 12th 2:00 PM

Community Caroling Night at the Outdoor Chapel. Sunday December 19th. 6:00 PM

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service – 7:30PM

Add an angel to the Angel Trees by giving a donation to The World Hunger Appeal. Either give on-line https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291 Or send directly to either address below.

*Offering and World Hunger Contributions to be sent to
Robert Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291

