



*The 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent – “Hope for Tomorrow”*  
November 29, 2020

## **Prelude**

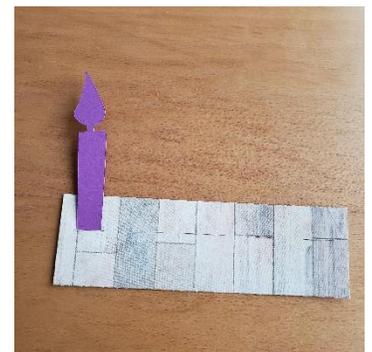
*Child in the Manger, Martha Main, YouTube*

## **LIGHTING OUR ADVENT CANDLE**

This Advent, we are looking to hear words of comfort, of challenge and of good news. The prophet Isaiah and the four Gospel authors were writing in a time when people needed desperately to hear all of these as well. This first week, Isaiah, the prophet, and Mark—the first of the four Gospels to be written—reassure the people that good news is beginning and yet they both say, “Make yourself ready! Raise your voices, change your hearts, get ready to be transformed, because now is the time.” Let us embrace hope that we can do what needs to be done to bring more light into the world.

**Advent Prayer** - Holy One, we thank you for the glimpses we catch of your gift of untiring hope. Even in the midst of fear, of challenge, of struggle—even when our view is obscured by clouds of doubt, ignite the flame of hope within us, that we might glow with its brilliance from the inside out. Help us face this bleak night of the soul and embrace it as a womb of rebirth. Amen.

*For those following along with our @ Home Advent Wreaths, take some time to prayerfully write the word “hope” on your first purple candle and place it in the first slot of your wreath. A little piece of tape on the back will help your candle shine tall.*



## Song 1

*O, Come All Ye Faithful*, YouTube

### A TIME OF PRAYER

*You are welcome to send prayer requests to Pastor Sarah. Spend a few moments connecting with God and lifting up your prayers.*

#### **The Lord's Prayer** (unison)

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

### WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

#### **Isaiah Reading—Isaiah 40: 1-11 (CEB)**

Comfort, comfort my people!  
says your God.  
Speak compassionately to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her that her  
compulsory service has ended,  
that her penalty has been paid,  
that she has received from the Lord's  
hand  
double for all her sins!

A voice is crying out:  
"Clear the Lord's way in the desert!  
Make a level highway in the  
wilderness for our God!

Every valley will be raised up,  
and every mountain and hill will be  
flattened.  
Uneven ground will become level,  
and rough terrain a valley plain.  
The Lord's glory will appear,

and all humanity will see it together;  
the Lord's mouth has commanded it."

A voice was saying:  
"Call out!"  
And another said,  
"What should I call out?"  
All flesh is grass;  
all its loyalty is like the flowers of the  
field.

The grass dries up  
and the flower withers  
when the Lord's breath blows on it.  
Surely the people are grass.

The grass dries up;  
the flower withers,  
but our God's word will exist forever.  
Go up on a high mountain,  
messenger Zion!

Raise your voice and shout,  
messenger Jerusalem!  
Raise it; don't be afraid;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"

Here is the Lord God,  
coming with strength,

with a triumphant arm,  
bringing his reward with him  
and his payment before him.

Like a shepherd, God will tend the flock;  
he will gather lambs in his arms  
and lift them onto his lap.  
He will gently guide the nursing ewes.

### **Gospel Reading—*Mark 1:1-15 (CEB)***

The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, God's Son, happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah:

*Look, I am sending my messenger before you.  
He will prepare your way,  
a voice shouting in the wilderness:  
"Prepare the way for the Lord;  
make his paths straight."*

John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. He announced, "One stronger than I am is coming after me. I'm not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."

At once the Spirit forced Jesus out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.

After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"

**MEDITATION**

*Hope for Tomorrow*

**WE RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD WITH OUR GIVING**

In struggle and in joy, God is faithful to us. We bring forth our offerings – our tithes, our treasures, our least coins –to demonstrate our faithfulness to God.+

You’re invited to take out your checkbook in these moments. As you write out your offering, be prayerful with each letter and number. In times such as these, when money becomes tight and our economy is under strain, God invites us to be generous and give what we can. These are gifts we freely give, as we are able and as we are called.

We ask that you please mail in your offerings to our office.

Zion United Church of Christ

8916 E. Troy Ave.

Indianapolis, IN 46239

You can also submit your offerings on our website through a secure PayPal donation button by using your credit or debit card or a PayPal account. Please know that PayPal receives a 2.2% processing fee and a \$0.30 transaction charge. You are able to set up reoccurring, monthly payments. Check it out on our website at [www.zionuccindy.net/donate](http://www.zionuccindy.net/donate).

**We Give Thanks** – O Faithful One, accept these gifts of our hearts and hands. May they be multiplied and magnified as the living presence of Christ in the world. Amen. +

**Carol of Hope**

*I Hear the Bells on Christmas Day, Zion Virtual Choir*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote this poem at Harvard on Christmas Day in 1863 during the heart of the Civil War. His wife had died tragically in a fire and he had just found out that his son had been injured as a soldier for the Union. He heard the sound of bells and began to write, spurred on by his sorrow at the state of humankind:

*“And in despair, I bowed my head:  
There is no peace on earth, ’I said,*

*‘For hate is strong and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to [all].’*

And yet hope wins out as he pens the fourth verse:

*“Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth [not] sleep;  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good will to [all].”*

## **WE ARE SENT FORTH WITH A BLESSING**

We wait for justice  
but we do not wait to work for change;  
We wait for restored health  
but we do not wait to work to heal;  
We wait for wholeness  
but we do not wait to work at binding brokenness;  
We wait for peace  
but we do not wait to work to eliminate hatred.

And so, my friends, like bells ringing out the news  
that the sun still shines even on cloudy days,  
fill the night left by sadness with messages of hope.  
Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep that hope alive in you  
and that spur you on in your work of justice and reconciliation.

Raise your voices and say with me...

“do not be afraid!”

**“do not be afraid!”**

Amen!

**Postlude with Ringing of the Bell**

*Hark the Herald Angels Sing*, Martha Main