



The 3rd Sunday of Advent – “Ode to Joy”
December 13, 2020

Prelude

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming, Martha Main

LIGHTING OUR ADVENT CANDLE

This week, we turn to Luke’s writing, which is an account in two acts: the Gospel biography of Jesus and then the story of the early church—the “Jesus community.” Whether you were a Jew or Gentile in those days, deciding to become a part of this illegal early Christian movement could bring punishment for your allegiance. Surely the message in both Luke and Isaiah that the downcast, lowly, and oppressed would rise up is a welcome and inspirational account. Like the Jewish exiled people of Isaiah’s time and like the early Christians, we also sometimes wonder where God is in our suffering. We long to hear the promise that a reason for joyful praise is the good news on the way!

Advent Prayer - Holy One, we thank you for the glimpses we catch of your gift of the depths of joy. Even in the midst of fear, of challenge, of struggle—even when we are not sure of your presence, ignite the flame of joy within us, that we might glow with its brilliance from the inside out. Help us face the silence of unknowing and embrace it as the pregnant pause before joyful new beginnings. Amen.





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

Song 1

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus, 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.

Special Music

Do You Hear What I Hear? Martha Main and Michael Main

WE HEAR GOD’S WORD

Isaiah Reading—Isaiah 57:14-19 (CEB)

It will be said: “Survey, survey; build a road! Remove barriers from my people’s road!”

The one who is high and lifted up,
who lives forever, whose name is holy, says:

I live on high, in holiness,
and also with the crushed and the lowly,
reviving the spirit of the lowly,
reviving the heart of those who have been crushed.

I won’t always accuse,
nor will I be enraged forever.

It is my own doing that their spirit is exhausted—

I gave them breath!

I was enraged about their illegal profits;

I struck them; in rage I withdrew from them. Yet they went on wandering wherever they wanted.

I have seen their ways, but I will heal them.

I will guide them,

and reward them with comfort.

And for those who mourn,

I will create reason for praise:

utter prosperity to those far and near,
and I will heal them, says the Lord.

Gospel Reading—*Luke 1:1-4, 26-56 (CEB)*

Many people have already applied themselves to the task of compiling an account of the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used what the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed down to us. Now, after having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, I have also decided to write a carefully ordered account for you, most honorable Theophilus. I want you to have confidence in the soundness of the instruction you have received...

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?"

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God."

Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her."

Mary said,
"With all my heart I glorify the Lord!
In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored
because the mighty one has done great things for me.

Holy is his name.

He shows mercy to everyone,
from one generation to the next,
who honors him as God.

He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
remembering his mercy,

just as he promised to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home.

Song 2

To a Maid Whose Name was Mary

MEDITATION

Ode to Joy

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD WITH OUR GIVING

Joining Mary's joyful song, our souls proclaim the greatness of the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Savior. With humble and grateful hearts, let us bring our offerings 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.

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.

We Give Thanks – Holy God, your love is magnified in the gift of your Son, whom you so freely share with us. Bless these gifts that we offer to lift up the lowly and fill the hungry in your coming reign of justice and peace; in Christ's name. Amen.=

Song of Joy

Joyful, Joyful, Zion Virtual Choir

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, which is the basis of the tune for our hymn "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee," has been a powerful witness to the human spirit to overcome adversity in many instances around the globe. British musician, Billy Bragg, once put his own spin on the translation of the original German choral score for a school teacher to teach the children in her classroom, and it soon became a popular anthem. In these words you can hear the call to resist division, to raise our voices, to "furnish every heart with joy and banish all hatred for good." Here's Bragg's interpretation:

*"See now like a Phoenix rising
from the rubble of the war
hope of ages manifested
peace and freedom evermore.
Brothers, sisters stand together,
raise your voices now as one.
Though by history divided,
reconciled in unison.*

*Throw off now the chains of ancient
bitterness and enmity.
And in hand let's walk together
on the path of liberty.
Hark...a new dawn is breaking;
raise your voices now as one.*

*Though by history divided,
reconciled in unison.*

*What 's to be then all my brothers,
sisters; what is in your hearts?
Tell me now the hopes you harbour,
What 's the task and where to start.
... Those speak ten million voices;
every word is understood.
Furnish every heart with joy
and banish all hatred for good."*

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 God is ever-present with us,
fill the night left by sadness with messages of joy.
Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep that joy alive in you
and that spur you on in your work of justice and reconciliation.

Raise your voices and repeat after me...

“do not be afraid!”

“do not be afraid!”

Amen!

Postlude with Ringing of the Bell

Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Martha Main

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