



The 4th Sunday of Advent – “Illuminating Peace”
December 20, 2020

Prelude

While By My Sheep, Martha Main, YouTube

LIGHTING OUR ADVENT CANDLE

The “great light” prophesied by Isaiah in today’s text is echoed in the first strains of John’s Gospel good news: the light that brings peace—that saves the people from all that would extinguish it—has been there from the beginning. The Word is made flesh and dwells among us. This reign is now... will we believe it? Will we continue to put flesh on it, embodying the peace meant for all humanity?

Advent Prayer - Holy One, we thank you for the glimpses we catch of your gift of peace on earth. Even in the midst of fear, of challenge, of struggle—even when we aren’t sure that goodwill among us can be found, ignite the flame of peace within us, that we might glow with its brilliance from the inside out. Help us face the pain of life and embrace the assurance that light is already here, and always coming. Amen.



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

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 9:2-7 (CEB)

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.

You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy.

They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,

as those who divide plunder rejoice.

As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them, the staff on their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor.

Because every boot of the thundering warriors, and every garment rolled in blood

will be burned, fuel for the fire.

A child is born to us, a son is given to us,

and authority will be on his shoulders.

He will be named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

There will be vast authority and endless peace

for David's throne and for his kingdom,

establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever.

Gospel Reading—John 1:1-18 (CEB)

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

The Word was with God in the beginning.

Everything came into being through the Word,

and without the Word nothing came into being.

What came into being

through the Word was life,

and the life was the light for all

people.

The light shines in the darkness,

and the darkness doesn't extinguish
the light.

A man named John was sent from God.
He came as a witness to testify
concerning the light, so that through him
everyone would believe in the light. He
himself wasn't the light, but his mission
was to testify concerning the light.

The true light that shines on all people
was coming into the world.

The light was in the world,
and the world came into being
through the light,

but the world didn't recognize the
light.

The light came to his own people,
and his own people didn't welcome
him.

But those who did welcome him,
those who believed in his name,
he authorized to become God's
children,
born not from blood

nor from human desire or passion,
but born from God.

The Word became flesh
and made his home among us.

We have seen his glory,
glory like that of a father's only son,
full of grace and truth.

John testified about him, crying out,
"This is the one of whom I said, 'He
who comes after me is greater than me
because he existed before me.'"

From his fullness we have all received
grace upon grace;
as the Law was given through Moses,
so grace and truth came into being
through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God.

God the only Son,
who is at the Father's side,
has made God known.

Song

Comfort, Comfort Now My People, YouTube

MEDITATION

Illuminating Peace

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD WITH OUR GIVING

At this time of year, the abundance of some and the needs of so many stand in marked contrast. As we bring now our tithes and offerings, may Christ's heart rejoice and the needs of others be tended.=

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 – Gracious God, teach us to give thanks in all circumstances, for you are always with us. Thank you for the privilege of sharing what we have with others, of giving ourselves away in love, and of receiving the gifts that others share with us. With our whole being, spirit and soul and body, we rejoice in you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.=

Carol of Peace

Go Tell It on the Mountain, Zion Virtual Choir

Our Carol of Peace this week is part of the repertoire of Christmas songs that were created by people who endured brutal hardships as the result of African colonization and North American slavery. But, though people of African descent were ripped from much of their cultural heritage, they maintained their heritage of group song, punctuated by West African rhythms and vocal stylings. Of course the safest thing for oppressed peoples to sing about was the religious beliefs that, first forced upon them by their oppressors, later gave many hope in the midst of suffering. “Go Tell It On The Mountain” is probably the best-known African American Christmas song and the words “seeker” and “watchman” are thought by some to have been code words for those seeking freedom on the Underground Railroad. It was made popular by the Fisk Jubilee Singers in the 19th century as these college students—themselves freed slaves—traveled the country to raise money and awareness. They were turned away from hotels, railway waiting rooms, and even some churches because of their color. As we sing, let us honor them, honor all who have endured slavery and the continued systemic racism caused by slavery. Let us...

*“Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.”*

... indeed that the Prince of Peace that calls us
to break the chains of oppression... *is born!*

WE ARE SENT FORTH WITH A BLESSING

In this season of waiting know this...
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 light has dawned and shines on all people,
fill the night left by sadness with messages of peace.
Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep that peace 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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= Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 1:
Advent through Pentecost (p. 15). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition