



*The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent – Being Present with Joy*

**Prelude**

*Piping Tune of the Patient Shepherd*

**Gathering**—We are called to claim the gift of being fully present with all people — those who mourn, those who grieve, those who have suffered indignity and oppression. Mary’s Magnificat is prophetic as well as joy-filled. She claims the overturning of injustice even before it has come to pass. In the difficulty of her situation, she “sings” with joy about the very real presence of God growing within her.

**Advent Wreath**

*Debi Hamblet*

Chorus:

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;  
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.*

*Reader:* We unwrap a present on this third Sunday of Advent with great anticipation for the gift that God will reveal.

Let us open our hearts as we open the gift!

*Reader:* The promise of Joy is the Divine Gift we receive.

So, what will we do with it?

*Reader:* The gift of joy is not the equivalent of happiness, but rather the deep conviction that we are called to be present in the work of bringing about “great things” — a better world for those who need it most.

We light this Candle of Joy as a sign that we will be Present with Joy in the world.

Reader: As we welcome the light, join us in singing our Advent chorus:

Chorus:

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;  
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.*

### **Prayer of Presence**

Reader: Holy Living Light of God,  
you are our Joyful Presence.  
Let this joy grow in our lives each day,  
so we can be a Present of Joy to others.  
Unwrap and open our hearts.  
May it be so.  
Amen.

### **Gathering Song**

*O Come, All Ye Faithful*, 182

**A Time of Prayer**—In this prayerful, present moment, we train our attention on those who are in distress. We pray this week for...*[continue with the prayer concerns of your community and the world]*. In this prayerful, present moment, we train our attention on thanksgiving and joy. We give thanks this week for...*[continue with the prayers of gratitude of your community and the world]*. In this prayerful, present moment we ask you, Christ Jesus, the Greatest Gift of All, to help us savor our journey toward the celebration of Christmas. Help us recognize and create moments of sweet presence rather than filling the voids with the things that do not last. Help us to stop, notice what we are experiencing, and accept it with open hearts and minds. In doing this, we allow you to meet us in the right here, right now, right where we are...

**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**

*He Shall Feed His Flock*, Bob Brown

## **We Hear God's Word**

*Luke is the Gospel author we draw from this week. The account of Mary visiting Elizabeth is the context for a description of joy that resides even in the midst of uncertainty and possible harm to Mary, the young pregnant woman at the margins of society. She believes with her whole heart that the child in her womb is just as the angel has declared... a gift from God, of God, the holiest of matter.*

*Luke 1:41-55 (NRSV)*

*Paula Prange*

<sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup>and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup>And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup>For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. <sup>45</sup>And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said,

'My soul magnifies the Lord,

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup> His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

<sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

<sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

<sup>55</sup> according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

## **Meditation**

*Being Present with Joy*

## Hymn

*Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates, 176*

## We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

**Invitation**—Let us bring forth our gifts this day—gifts of our resources, our time, our talent, our very lives—that through this ministry to which Christ has called us God’s presence in this world might be made known.

**December Benevolence**—The Christmas Fund

## Doxology

**We Give Thanks**—God of joy, bless these gifts that we bring before you this day. Use these gifts that your joy might be made known in this world through this ministry to which you have called us. Help us to be present in our community as we live out the mission you have given us. With gratitude we lift up these gifts to you. Amen.

## Hymn

*Joy to the World, 179*

## Benediction

“No matter how busy one’s day is with chores or service, or even religious duties, we must stop and become aware, in the present moment, of God right here, right now. Throughout the week, pause just for a moment to ‘practice the presence of God,’ so as to be filled with joy.”

*[adapted from Amy Oden, Right Here, Right Now]*

So now go and be truly present  
so you may be a gift of presence for others.  
That’s all that is expected —  
that the gift that is YOU  
is the best gift you can give.  
In the name of the Holy Presence,  
the Divine Gift,  
and the Spirit of Joy that is just waiting for us  
to unwrap abundant life. Amen.

## Postlude

*Joy to the World*