



Third Sunday of Advent December 13, 2020



Introduction

Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. “All God’s children got a robe,” go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity,
Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, one God,
whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever. **Amen.**

Together let us honestly and humbly confess
that we have not lived as God desires.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Loving and forgiving God,
we confess that we are held captive by sin.
In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray.
We have not welcomed the stranger;
we have not loved our neighbor;
we have not been Christ to one another.
Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin.
Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.

People of God, hear this glad news:
by God’s endless grace your sins are forgiven,
and you are free—free from all that holds you back
and free to live in the peaceful kingdom of God.
May you be strengthened in God’s love,
✝ comforted by Christ’s peace,
and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn ELW # 257 (vs 5-6) / LBW 34 (vs 1, 4)

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

Read the text [here](#).

Psalmody: Psalm 126

¹When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream.

²**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.**

Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.”

³The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed.

⁴**Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses of the Negeb.**

⁵Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy.

⁶**Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.**

Gospel: John 1: 6-8, 19-28

John’s gospel describes Jesus as the “light of the world.” John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion.*

~ Isaiah 61:1-3

In this text, we hear that the prophet Isaiah has been anointed by the Spirit of the Lord to do the Lord's work – and that work is to bring good news to the oppressed; to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God. This prophet knows he has been anointed – claimed by God and given a task to do. He has been sent to Proclaim the good news.

The psalmist sings of the great things the Lord has done. With laughter and shouts of joy the people said, "The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed." The people know they have been blessed and respond in joy. They are proclaiming the good news.

John the Baptist was able to say to the priests and Levites who questioned him: "I am not the Messiah... I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord." John knew who he was and who he was NOT. He was sent by God, with an important purpose, but he was not the savior of the world.

He was, in the words of Dan Aykroyd in the movie *Blues Brothers*, "on a mission from God." He was sent to preach a message of repentance, pointing others toward Christ, toward one far greater than he was himself, toward the one who was the Messiah - the Savior of the world. He was proclaiming the good news to all who came near.

Here is the interesting thing about all this proclaiming – it is something we are also called to do. We may not have the audience that John had, and we may not have been anointed in the quite the same way the prophet Isaiah was, but we have been anointed through our baptism, and **we** have been sent to proclaim the Good News as well. As our Gospel tells us about John, so we are called to do, "He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him."

We tend to think of this proclaiming stuff to be the "preachers' job," but that is not quite true. Sure – it is the job of the preacher to proclaim the good news to you, but it is also the preacher's job to send **you** out to proclaim the good news to others. I will invite people to come and worship, but it is also up to you to invite people to come and worship and learn about our God.

Too often, we assume that others know about God, but in this day and age, it is just as likely that what they might have heard is wrong, or at best, half-truths.

If we do not do our part to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ – the one who came, died on a cross, was raised from the dead and promises to come again, it may be that no one else will either. If others only hear about Jesus from a televangelist who says they can only be saved by sending them money, then they have not heard the true Good News.

The true Good News is that Jesus loves them - that he came to proclaim Good News to the poor, the hungry, the downtrodden, those in prison, those who are sick, and to those who doubt. The Good News is that Jesus came that you, each and every one of you, might live. Jesus came so that everyone might hear the Good News of God's love.

We are all called to proclaim the Good News – Isaiah, John, you, and me. All of us are to proclaim the Good News of the babe in the manger, who was born **so that** we might be saved through Him. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 244 / LBW # 25 *Rejoice, Rejoice Believers*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Nicene Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father, through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human .**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world.
Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

God of preachers and messengers, you have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming good news. Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people who contribute their prayers and talents to public worship. Embed your word in their hearts.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of every living creature, you announce the year of your favor for all of creation. Extend your kindness and relief to endangered animals and plants. Strengthen the human beings who rely on the rhythms of nature to make their living.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of all peoples and nations, you plant us as your oaks of righteousness and ask us to care for one another. Be present with the leaders of every nation as they govern. Give them a spirit of righteousness, that your goodness and mercy is revealed through their actions. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of exiles and wanderers, you repair what was once destroyed. We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm. Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of the powerful and helpless, you clothe us with strength when our spirits are weak and weary. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. Make your church a place of refuge and healing. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of sinners and saints, you offer joy even in the midst of our grief. We are grateful for the beloved, imperfect people whose lives testified to your radiant love. Anoint all who mourn with the oil of gladness. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;**

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn ELW # 267 / LBW # 39

Joy to the World

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.