

Antecommunion Service: December 17, 2023: Advent 3B

Celebrant: Blessed are you, holy and living One.

People: **You come to your people and set them free.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A moment of silence for self-reflection

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

God of all mercy, we confess that we have sinned against you, opposing your will in our lives. We have denied your goodness in each other, in ourselves, and in the world you have created. We repent of the evil that enslaves us, the evil we have done, and the evil done on our behalf. Forgive, restore, and strengthen us through our Savior Jesus Christ, that we may abide in your love and serve only your will. Amen.

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Let us pray together: **Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.**

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

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— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,

so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Canticle 15 The Song of Mary—*Magnificat, Luke 1:46-55*

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; *

for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: *

the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him *

in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, *

he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, *

and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, *

and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel, *

for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

The promise he made to our fathers, *

to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. World without end. Amen.

Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel John 1:6-8,19-28

Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John. **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah,

nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Sermon

Hymn Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

*Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.*

*Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne. Amen.*

The Nicene Creed

**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 whom all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
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 the People

With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation. In peace, we pray to you, Lord God. *Silence*

For this community, the nation, and the world;
For the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression.

For the peace and unity of the world;
That a spirit of respect may grow among nations and peoples.

For all who love and trust in God, that divisions may cease;
And that all may be one, as you and the Father are one.

For the just and proper use of your creation;
That we may treat your creation with the love of the Creator.

We honor and pray for our Indigenous neighbors.
That we may dwell together in respectful harmony.

For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;
For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and the needy.

For the special needs and concerns of this congregation.
Silence. Hear us, Lord; **For your mercy is great.**

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life. *Silence.*
We will exalt you, O God our King; **And praise your Name for ever and ever.**

We pray for all who have died, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom. *Silence.*
Lord, let your loving kindness be upon them. **May they rest in your peace eternally.**

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we pray together:
**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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

We pray together for Christ's presence:
**My Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the bread and wine.
I love you above all things, and long for you in my soul.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come spiritually into my heart. I embrace you
and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.**

Celebrant: While we long to receive the sacrament of Christ's Body,

People: **We become the sacrament of Christ's Body.**

Celebrant: Let your lives be manna to feed our hunger for communion.

People: **The love we share becomes bread for the world.**

Blessing May Christ, the Son of God, be manifest in you, that your lives may be a light to the world;
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be in you, among you,
and remain with you always.

Dismissal Go in peace and hope and joy to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Lord Bless You and Keep You [Lutkin]

Acapeldridge