



“As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’”

Mark 1:2-3

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

Second Sunday of Advent – December 10, 2023

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Rev. Katie McNeal, Presiding Minister

Maizy Fisher, Director of Music Ministries

*We are delighted to have you worship with us this morning!
Know that you are welcome here just as you are.*

*If you are looking for a church to call home, why not consider making this one your own? If this is your first time visiting us, please fill out the visitor information card stapled to your bulletin. Everything you need to follow worship can be found in this bulletin. As you are comfortable, please rise when there is an * and join in the congregational responses, noted in **bold**.*

All songs are marked with numbers. The red book in the pew has all the songs. Look for the large number in the upper corner of the page to find the correct song.

*During the time of **Peace**, you are invited to turn to those around you and offer a word of peace. We suggest a handshake and saying, "Peace be with you." You are also welcomed to offer another gesture of peace (wave, fist-bump, smile, etc.). Hand sanitizer is available in each pew.*

*At the time of **Offering**, you are invited to share a gift. You may also offer updates to our ongoing prayer list using the yellow cards in the pews and placing them in the offering plates. Visitor information cards and member attendance cards (attached to the front of the bulletin) may also be placed in the offering plates.*

*At the time of **Holy Communion**, all are welcome to come forward via the center aisle, receive the elements, and return via the side aisles. We begin at the front of the right side, commune all on the right side, then we will invite the left side forward. When you come forward, you may receive the bread from the pastor (gluten free wafers are available), then pre-filled cups with wine or grape juice from the assisting minister. You may consume the elements after receiving them then place the empty cup in the tray held by the acolyte. Those who do not receive Holy Communion are welcome to come forward for a blessing.*

If you need a restroom, restrooms are located on the bottom floor at the far side of the building from the elevator. Restrooms may be accessed either via the stairs in the rear of the sanctuary, the stairs by the Greeting Area, or the elevator.

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to fill out the blue prayer request forms located in each pew. The cards will be collected during our hymn of the day, and prayers will be offered during the prayers of intercession.

PRELUDE and ANNOUNCEMENTS

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

We gather today.

It is time to worship!

We listen for God

It is time to hear!

We receive God's grace.

It is time to be loved!

We leave in peace.

It is time to serve others!

As we wait for Jesus' arrival, Emmanuel, God-with-us, is already here in this time and place.

***CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

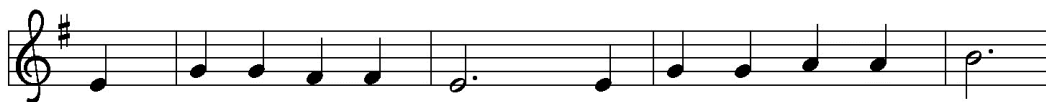
Sometimes we forget that God is already here. Sometimes we think that we have nowhere left to turn. Sometimes we feel frozen or are rushing with no time to rest; and it feels like life is happening to us too quickly or like our lives will never change. Sometimes it feels like we are out of time for forgiveness. But for God, there is always time for forgiveness. God, Emmanuel, is already here. God's love is with us. And so we trust God, and we confess our sins together.

Holy One, We have not stayed awake.

**We have missed you when you appeared in our neighbors, in strangers half a world away,
in the suffering planet.**

**We have wasted the time and the skills that you gave us and assumed we were powerless
to mend the breaches in our world.**

**Sometimes, we even gave up on your mercy, justice, and love. God, is it too late for us?
Speak tenderly to our anxious hearts. Tear open the heavens and heal what we have done.**



1 Have mer - cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol - emn prayer.
2 Have mer - cy on us, Christ, and wash a - way our sin.
3 Have mer - cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de - part.



We come to hear your liv - ing word; it saves us from de - spair.
Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be - gin.
Re - new us with your sav - ing pow'r; cre - ate in us new hearts!

People of God,
 God's judgment is certain
 and God's forgiveness is lightning fast.
 Hear this good news:
 in the name of Jesus Christ, all your sins are forgiven.
 Forgiveness gives us the courage we need.
 Wherever we wait for God's time to come,
 we will witness wonders.
Amen.

***GATHERING SONG *Prepare the Royal Highway* (ELW 264)**



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
 2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
 3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
 4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
 Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
 Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
 His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
 God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
 All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
 So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

We change our minds and our passions.
We grow and expand.
We age and fade.
Yet through all our changes,
we know God is constant and never leaves us.
As we light another candle on this wreath,
may God lend us patience and stability,
that we will know peace in all the changes of this life.

Light the second candle during the singing of the hymn.

ADVENT SONG *Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah* (ELW 240)



1 Light one can-dle to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
2 Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.



He shall bring sal - va - tion to Is - ra - el, God ful - fills the prom - ise.
He shall feed the flock like a shep-herd, gent - ly lead them home-ward.

Let us pray: Praise to you, O God, who gives us courage to start again.
You fasten righteousness around your waist
and baptize with the Holy Spirit's fire.
Bless us as we mirror your mighty fire in these simple flames,
and teach us to mirror your justice in the paths we prepare.
We ask that peace abound,
until none hurt or destroy over all the earth.

THE MAGNIFICAT (Luke 1:46-55)

All

1., 3. My soul pro-claims your great-ness, O God, and my
2. You have cast the might - y down from their thrones, and up -
spir - it re - joic - es in you. You have looked with love on your
lift - ed the hum-ble of heart. You have filled the hun - gry with
ser - vant here, and blessed me all my life through.
won-drous things, and left the wealth-y no part.
Great and might - y are you, O Ho - ly One,
Great and might - y are you, O Faith - ful One,
strong is your kind-ness ev - er - more. How you fa - vor the
strong is your jus - tice, strong your love, as you prom-ised to
weak and low-ly one, hum - bling the proud of heart!
Sar - ah and A - bra - ham, kind - ness for - ev - er - more. D.C.

PRAYER FOR OUTREACH MINISTRY

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Silence for reflection

READING: Isaiah 40:1-11

A reading from Isaiah.

¹Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her
that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

⁶A voice says, “Cry out!”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;

lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
“Here is your God!”

¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;

his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Silence for reflection

***GOSPEL READING: Mark 1:1-8**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

***SONG OF PRAISE**

Hal-le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal -
- le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le -
lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

SERMON

Silence for reflection

***HYMN OF THE DAY** *There's a Voice in the Wilderness* (ELW 255)

(Blue prayer cards are collected)



1 There's a voice in the wil - der - ness cry - ing, a
2 O Je - ru - sa - lem, her - ald good tid - ings, as -
3 But the word of our Sav - ior is faith - ful, the



call from the ways un - trod: Pre - pare in the des - ert a
cend to the heights and sing! Pro - claim to a des - o - late
arm of our God is strong, who stands in the midst of the



high - way, a high - way for our God!
peo - ple the com - ing of their king.
na - tions and soon will right the wrong.



The val - leys shall be ex - alt - ed, the
Like flow'rs of the field we per - ish, like
Lord, feed your flock like a shep - herd, the



loft - y hills brought low; make straight all the crook - ed
grass our works de - cay; the pow'r and the pomp of
lambs so gent - ly hold; in pas - tures of peace now



plac - es where God, our God, may go!
na - tions shall pass like a dream a - way.
lead them, and bring them to your fold.

*APOSTLES' CREED

Let us confess our faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;

he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,

and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration. *A brief silence for reflection*

Emmanuel, send forth your faithful people with words of promise and forgiveness. Teach your church to be bold in revealing your good news in word and in deed. Turn the hearts of the nations toward righteousness and peace. Increase cooperation for justice. Reveal your majesty in creation. Heal the earth where it longs for renewal. Come among us and hear us O God.



Emmanuel, comfort your people with words of love and healing. Surround all who are grieving, all who know depression or anxiety, and all who feel lonely or forgotten. Be a steadfast presence when all else feels uncertain. Bring reassurance to people awaiting new diagnoses or treatments. Watch with those who keep vigil. And bring strength and wellness to all who suffer in mind, body, or spirit, especially Bob, Geneva, Cherry, Winnie, Henry, Harry, Roy, Ellen, Ruth, Sally, Katie, Debi, those on our prayer list, and all whom we remember in our hearts.



Emmanuel, bless the memory of saints from ages past and the anticipation of saints yet to be born. Inspire us to live in faith as we await your new heaven and earth. Comfort us in your abiding presence as we gather these prayers with the prayers of this congregation (*blue prayer cards are read*). Restore us with your everlasting mercy. Come among us and hear us O God!



*EXCHANGE OF PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Let us share Christ's peace with one another.

OFFERING

OFFERTORY HYMN *Hark, the Glad Sound* (ELW 239)

**Rise on 4th verse.*



1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior
2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come



prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -
bond - age held. The gates of brass be -
soul to cure, and with the trea - sures -
shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal



pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.
fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.
of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.
arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.

*OFFERING PRAYER

We give thanks together for all God's gifts as we offer them back to God.

Loving God,

For the time we have, we say:

Thank you.

For the gifts we offer, we say:

Thank you.

For the chance to help others, we say:

Thank you.

For the people whose lives will be better because of these gifts, we say:

Thank you.

For the ways you are changing the world, we say:

Thank you.

We pray in the name of Jesus, who appears wherever people need our help.

Amen.

*GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

God our Creator, the abundance of your goodness overflowed into creation—
earth, sky, water, plants, animals, and human beings
all came to be and you called us good.

Down through the generations,
your goodness continued to flow:
in friendship with humanity, in acts of liberation, in provision for your people.
In all of this, you prepared a way.

And so, with joyful hearts, we join the angels in their song:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.



Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -



san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Finally, when the time was right,
you entered our human existence in Jesus,
who was born humbly,
who spent his life with the unlikely and unloved,
who healed and taught and preached the good news of your way.

On the night when he was betrayed,
he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying,
“Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”
Again after supper,
he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying,
“This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

Whenever we share this bread and cup,
Jesus is here with us, in this moment, in this time and place.
Whenever we share this bread and cup,
God takes us out of time
and joins us with God’s people in every time and place.
Whenever we share this bread and cup,
we proclaim the mystery of faith.
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Send the Spirit of your presence on us now, O God,
so that we too will overflow with goodness.
Strengthen us by this meal,
so that through us,
your presence will flow out
in what we do and say.
In this, we prepare the way for your arrival again,
when you will return to remake all of existence
into your kingdom of perfect mercy, justice, and love.
Amen.

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

***INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

The time is now! Come and take your place at the table.

Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

Through this meal, we know forgiveness, life, and salvation as the blessings of God's sacramental grace. In response to Jesus' invitation, all are welcome to come forward and experience the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine of communion. Those who do not receive the elements of bread and wine are invited to come forward for a blessing. Grape juice and gluten free wafers are available.

COMMUNION SONG *Lamb of God*



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;

2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;

3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.

you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.

e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

COMMUNION HYMN *On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry* (ELW 249)



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an - nounc - es
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; make straight the
3 We hail you as our Sav - ior, Lord, our ref - uge
4 Stretch forth your hand, our health re - store, and make us
5 All praise to you, e - ter - nal Son, whose ad - vent



that the Lord is nigh; a - wake and heark - en,
way for God with - in, and let us all our
and our great re - ward; with - out your grace we
rise to fall no more; oh, let your face up -
has our free - dom won, whom with the Fa - ther



for he brings glad tid - ings of the King of kings!
hearts pre - pare for Christ to come and en - ter there.
waste a - way like flow'rs that with - er and de - cay.
on us shine and fill the world with love di - vine.
we a - dore, and Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er - more.

***POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

God for whom we wait, in this meal you give us a foretaste of that day when the hungry will be fed with good things. Send us forth to make known your deeds and to proclaim the greatness of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

***BLESSING**

God our Creator, who made the starlit sky, blesses you. God blesses you.

God blesses you.

Jesus our Redeemer, who arrives at just the right time, blesses you. Jesus blesses you.

Jesus blesses you.

The Holy Spirit our Enlivener, who sparks hope for the hopeless, blesses you. The Holy Spirit blesses you.

The Holy Spirit blesses you.

You are blessed in the name of God the Three in One.

Amen.

***SENDING SONG *All Earth is Hopeful* (ELW 266)**



To - da la tie - rra es - pe - ra_al Sal - va - dor
 1 All earth is hope - ful, the Sav - ior comes at last!
 2 Peo - ple of Is - rael, you heard the proph - et tell:
 3 Moun - tains and val - leys will have to be pre - pared;
 4 We first saw Je - sus a ba - by in a crib.



y_el sur - co_a - bier - to, la ob - ra del Se - ñor; es el
 Fur - rows lie o - pen for God's cre - a - tive task: this, the
 "A vir - gin moth - er will bear Em - man - u - el"; she con -
 new high - ways o - pened, new pro - to - cols de - clared. Al - most
 This same Lord Je - sus to - day has come to live in our



mun - do que lu - cha por la li - ber - tad, re -
 la - bor of peo - ple who strug - gle to see how
 ceived him, "God with us," our broth - er, whose birth re -
 here! God is near - ing, in beau - ty and grace! All
 world; he is pres - ent, in neigh - bors we see our



cla - ma jus - ti - cia y bus - ca la ver - dad. dar - nos li - ber - tad.
 God's truth and jus - tice set ev - 'ry - bod - y free.
 stores hope and cour - age to chil - dren of this earth.
 clear ev - 'ry gate - way, in haste, come out in haste!
 Je - sus is with us, and ev - er sets us free.

***DISMISSAL**

As you leave this place, remember:
 whether you are waiting for a new beginning
 or just waiting for something to end,
 God is sustaining you.
 Keep alert; trust Emmanuel; seek peace,
 And rejoice, God is with you.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Assisting in worship today:

Assisting Minister: Denise Hager

Acolyte: Abigail C

Usher: Dave Knauff

Greeters:

Offering: Ava N & Emma N

Wreath Lighter: Denise H

Attendance Last Week: 55 + 4 zoom

Notes for the day's texts:

God comes, in the past in the history of Israel and the incarnation of Jesus, in the present in the word and sacrament of each Sunday, and in the future at the end of all things. The preaching of John the Baptist calls us to prepare for God—perhaps in many ways quite different from our preparing for Christmas.

By connecting John the Baptist with Elijah, Isaiah, Malachi, and the Jordan, Mark introduces Jesus as the culmination of Jewish tradition. This reading exemplifies the reason that Christians have continued to proclaim the Old Testament, without which countless New Testament references make no sense. So John the Baptist is not a crazed wild man, but like the prophets of old is the mouthpiece of God. The Christ who came, who comes, and who will come brings God's Holy Spirit to us.

Today's Music

Prepare the Royal Highway. Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772-1847; tr. Lutheran Book of Worship, Music: Swedish folk tune, 17th cent. Augsburg Fortress / Public Domain.

Magnificat (from Holden Evening Prayer): Text and Music: Marty Haugen, GIA Publications, Inc. © 2016

There's a Voice in the Wilderness. Text: James Lewis Milligan, 1876-1961, alt., Music: Henry Hugh Bancroft, 1904-1988. Public Domain / Estate of Henry Hugh Bancroft.

Hark, the Glad Sound. Text: Phillip Doddridge, 1702-1751, Music: Thomas Haweis, 1734-1820. Public Domain.

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry. Text: Charles Coffin, 1676-1749; tr. composite, Music: European tune, adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1571-1621. Public Domain.

All Earth is Hopeful. Text: Alberto Taulé, b. 1932; tr. Madeleine Forell Marshall, b. 1946, Music: Alberto Taulé. OCP (Oregon Catholic Press). Liturgy words and music taken from SundaysandSeasons.com Copyright © 2023 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

Next Week's Readings

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 *Righteousness and praise flourish like a garden*

Psalm 126 *The Lord has done great things for us*

Luke 1:46b-55 *You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 *Kept in faith until the coming of Christ*

John 1:6-8, 19-28 *A witness to the light*