**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**December 20th, 2020**

**Theme:** Without fanfare, an angel announced the coming of a baby to Mary. While she waited, she took the opportunity to seek out her support community and prepare for the child’s arrival.

**PRELUDE**

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Holy God, we confess that we have forgotten what this season is about – the birth of Jesus.  
**We get confused, so we wrap ourselves with planning, and shopping, and gift giving and sending,**   
with so much decorating and card-writing and partying that we haven’t left any time…  
**to sit in the dark, to sit in silence,**   
to contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation and to give thanks for this one life that changed the world. We have celebrated so many Christmases, and yet –  
**we still need You to remind us what this season is all about,**  
to turn us around and set us in the right direction.

**Make the generosity that drives us this season be present all year.**  
May the intentional reaching out to the far-flung and the neighbor continue beyond the holidays. May our hearts, full of so much, be full of love,  
**For You, for each other, and for ourselves. Heal us, we pray.**

Hear this Good News! God could not love you any more than God loves you at this very moment. You are that beloved. Know that wrapped in love, grace and forgiveness are ours, for today and always.

**Amen**

**GREETING**

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

**And also with you.**

**OPENING SONG** *Joyous Light of Heavenly Glory* Haugen

**Joyous light of heav'nly glory, loving glow of God's own face,**

**you who sing creation's story, shine on ev'ry land and race.**

**Now as (morning dawns\*) around us, we shall raise our songs to you.** \*original words are (evening falls)

**God of daybreak, God of shadows, come and light our hearts anew.**

**In the stars that grace the darkness, in the blazing sun of dawn,**

**in the light of peace and wisdom, we can hear your quiet song.**

**Love that fills the night with wonder, love that warms the weary soul,**

**love that bursts all chains asunder, set us free and make us whole.**

**You who made the heaven's splendor, ev'ry dancing star of night,**

**make us shine with gentle justice, let us each reflect your light.**

**Mighty God of all creation, gentle Christ who lights our way,**

**loving Spirit of salvation, lead us on to endless day.**

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**

Today, as we relight the first three candles of **HOPE, PEACE**, and **JOY**, we light the fourth candle, the candle of **LOVE**. This is a time for kindness, thinking of others, and sharing with others. It is a time to love as God loved us by giving us his most precious gift, Jesus. In the Book of Deuteronomy, we find these words from Deuteronomy 10: *“For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*”

**ADVENT HYMN** *Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah* # 240 v.4

**Light four candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.**

**He is coming, tell the glad tidings. Let your lights be shining!**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray**: God of surprises, You blessed Mary and Elizabeth with the gift of holy children, and they faithfully embraced your calling. Give us peace and joy as we await your coming among us, in the form of a humble baby—our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.**

**FIRST READING** Psalm 113

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

**GOSPEL** Luke 1:26-56

The Holy Gospel according to Luke the 1st chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

The reading concludes: The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ**

**SERMON**

**SERMON HYMN** *My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness #251*

***My soul proclaims your greatness, Lord; I sing my Savior's praise!***

***You looked upon my lowliness, and I am full of grace.***

***Now ev'ry land and ev'ry age this blessing shall proclaim—***

***great wonders you have done for me, and holy is your name.***

**To all who live in holy fear your mercy ever flows.**

**With mighty arm you dash the proud, their scheming hearts expose.**

**The ruthless you have cast aside, the lowly throned instead;**

**the hungry filled with all good things, the rich sent off unfed.**

**To Israel, your servant blest, your help is ever sure;**

**the promise to our parents made their children will secure.**

**Sing glory to the Holy One, give honor to the Word,**

**and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all adored.**

**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 THE CHURCH**

We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. God of Hope, **hear our prayer.**

Our eyes await the fulfillment of all your promises, the answer to all our prayers: your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, who taught us opening.

**LORD’S PRAYER**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

**BENEDICTION**

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, ☩ now and forever. **Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN** *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee #836*

**Joyful, joyful we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love!**

**Hearts unfold like flow'rs before thee, praising thee, their sun above.**

**Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the gloom of doubt away.**

**Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.**

**All thy works with joy surround thee ,earth and heav'n reflect thy rays,**

**stars and angels sing around thee, center of unbroken praise.**

**Field and forest, vale and mountain, flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,**

**chanting bird, and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in thee.**

**Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest,**

**wellspring of the joy of living, ocean-depth of happy rest!**

**Thou our Father, Christ our brother, all who live in love are thine;**

**teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine!**

**Dismissal**

Go in peace. Stay safe and be safe. Prepare the way of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

**POSTLUDE**