

Nov 29 2020 ADVENT I Service of Word and Prayer

We are using the Service of the Word liturgy this morning, from your green hymn book, the Lutheran Book of Worship, page 126. The prayers are based on Sundays & Seasons. Shut off all the distractions in your home. Enjoy the quiet for a bit – take in some deep breaths. Light your candle. May your family be blessed in this time together.

Beginning this Sunday, you may wish to add an Advent wreath as part of your home worship centre. If you don't have a table wreath, you could use 4 candles, (or battery operated votives) for the Advent season. Usually there are 3 blue candles and 1 pink one. Many people also add a white candle on Christmas Day.

The Gathering

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

Hymn: ELW 257 or LBW 34 - O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Dialogue p.127

Blessed is he who comes as king, who comes in the name of the Lord.
Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
I will hear what the Lord has to say - a voice that speaks for peace.
Peace for all people and his friends and those who turn to him in their hearts.
His help is near for those who fear him, and his glory will live in our land.
Blessed is he who comes as king, who comes in the name of the Lord.
Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

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.

The Lord be with you ~ and also with you.

Let us pray: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen

The Lighting of the Advent Wreath ADVENT I

light the first candle, then read this blessing

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe.
You call all nations to walk in your light
and to seek your ways of justice and peace,
for the night is past, and the dawn of your coming is near.
Bless us as we light the first candle of this wreath.
Rouse us from sleep,
that we may be ready to greet our Lord when he comes
and welcome him into our hearts and homes,
for he is our light and our salvation.

Blessed be God forever. **Amen.**

The Word

The Old Testament lesson is from **Isaiah 64:1-9**

Psalms 80 vs 1-7, 17-19 is found on **page 252**

The New Testament lesson is from **1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

Please rise for the gospel lesson.

Holy, Holy, Holy, our hearts adore you. Our hearts are glad to say the words: you are Holy God.

Gospel: Mark 13:24-37 Glory to you o Lord / Praise to you o Christ.

Sermon

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus calls us to stay awake--to stay alert--to keep watching. But how can a person stay awake all the time? God made us so that we need sleep. Most of us need eight hours of sleep every night, and some of us also need a nap now and then. Would Christ be so cruel as to condemn us for succumbing to the sleepiness that is built into our bodies and souls? Surely not! We are not required to that which we are not capable of giving.

In the gospel of Mark watchfulness is a metaphor for faithfulness. This little parable about the master going on a journey and telling his doorkeeper to keep watch is really a call to us to be faithful while we await Jesus' return--to live faith-filled lives. It was difficult for those first disciples to stay alert, because they expected Jesus to return any day. It's even more difficult today. It has been two thousand years now, and Jesus has not yet returned. So how can we stay prepared and be faithful and remain expectant day by day?

Here is an old story about Fred Craddock, that great teacher of preachers, was serving as the pastor of a small church in Oklahoma. One day he got a call from the hospital--from a woman who was a patient there. The woman belonged to the church where Craddock was pastor, but she hadn't been to church in quite some time. Craddock didn't know that she was in the hospital, but she called to ask him to visit. She told him that she would be having surgery the next day. It was clear from the tone of her voice that she was afraid--really afraid--on the verge of panic.

Craddock dropped everything and went to see the woman. When he got there, he noted the stack of magazines on her nightstand--movie magazines featuring articles on movie stars. There was no Bible to be seen--nothing substantial anywhere--nothing at all. Craddock thought to himself: "There isn't a spiritual calorie in the whole bunch! No wonder she has no resources to deal with the storms of life."

You see, this woman was facing the possibility, however remote, that she might die the next day--and she knew that she wasn't ready. She had fewer than 24 hours to get ready, and she didn't know where to start. No wonder she was panicked! How do you get ready for death on short notice? It is certainly possible to *get* ready---but it is much better to *live* ready!

We all know that life holds surprises - health – viruses – accidents - economic slumps - and a host of other things, that can undo us. The point is that it takes a good deal of strength to cope with the things that life throws at us. It takes

spiritual maturity. If we don't have our feet planted solidly, life's curve balls will knock us out of the box.

Jesus was warning his disciples, including us, that he will return, and that it makes a great difference whether or not we are prepared. Everything will finally come into focus--and the focal point will be Christ. So we continue to lead faith-filled lives, day by day. We need to be ready for life! As someone has said, "Life is what happens while we are making other plans." Someone else captured the same idea when they said, "To give God a good laugh, just tell him your plans."

We need strength--spiritual maturity--to deal with the good things too. It takes spiritual maturity to keep a marriage going. It takes spiritual maturity to deal with a child who keeps us awake at night. It takes spiritual maturity to deal with financial disaster, and also with financial success. It takes strength--spiritual maturity--to swim against the current--but that is what we need to do sometimes.

As Advent begins today, we are invited to practice hope and faithfulness. During the Advent season our task is to respond to the call of the good news lest we become distracted by our worries and concerns. Watching daily for God's presence in our lives, enriches our own personal spirituality. So Jesus says, **"Watch! Keep alert! Pray!"** Live faithfully! Live a faith-filled life! Then you will be ready! Amen

Hymn: ELW 240 - Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah

Our Response

OFFERING PRAYER

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things.
You have set before us these gifts of your good creation.
Prepare us for your heavenly banquet, nourish us with food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Prayers of the people are led by Jeff Kargus

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.*

We pray for the ministry we share in Christ's name. Open our hearts to your call for justice, peace, and healing. Attune us to the needs of the world as you draw near. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for this planet in need of restoration: for devastated habitats, polluted waters, thawing ice, blazing fires, swelling floods, and long-lasting droughts. Renew the face of the earth and our relationship to it. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all people who care for others in our community and around the world. Fill them with compassion and the power to respond with justice for those who are oppressed, with welcome for those who are excluded, and with relief for those who suffer. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for people who are in crisis as the seasons change: for those without homes facing severe weather, for those who are unemployed or underemployed, and for those in poverty or facing food insecurity. Relieve their burdens, sustain their bodies, and ease their minds. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the people in our families and congregation who live with depression, anxiety, chronic pain, addiction, and other invisible illnesses. Ease their suffering and support them when they struggle. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We give thanks for the lives and witness of those who died while waiting for justice, peace, or healing, those whose names we know and those whose names are known only to you. Sustain all who still yearn for the completion of your redeeming work. 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.**

The peace of Christ be with you always and also with you.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray **The Lord's Prayer:**

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.

Hymn: ELW 239 or LBW 35 - Hark, the Glad Sound!

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you,
The Lord look upon you with favour and give you (+) peace. Amen.

Dismissal Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.