

Dec 13 ADVENT III Service of Holy Communion

Preparing for worship:

We will have Holy Communion together - separately this worship time. You will need either wine or grape juice and bread of some kind. You may use what cups & plates you have. Here is a list: a white cloth, large cup or individual ones, a large paten(plate) for bread or small –depending on the size of your family. A cross and your Advent Wreath. 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. Today we traditionally light the pink candle.

Good morning – welcome to worship,

The Liturgy is from the Lutheran Book of Worship beginning on p.78, and the modified prayers this morning are based on those from Sundays & Seasons.

GATHERING TOGETHER

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

Hymn: ELW 715 - Christ, Be Our Light

The Lord be with you – and also with you

Let us pray:

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord, God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets. As we are anointed by your Spirit, may we testify to your light; through your Son, Jesus Christ our sovereign and our Savior. Amen.

Lighting the Advent Wreath: Advent 3

Use this blessing when lighting three candles.

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe.

Your prophets spoke of a day when the desert would blossom and waters would break forth in the wilderness.

Bless us as we light the candles on this wreath.

Strengthen our hearts as we prepare for the coming of the Lord.

May he give water to all who thirst, for he is our light and our salvation.

Blessed be God forever. **Amen.**

THE WORD

The Old Testament lesson is from **Isaiah 61:1-4,8-11**

Psalm 126 is found on page 280

The New Testament lesson is from **1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

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

Sermon ~ Rev. Norine Gullons

Just before a child's second birthday they usually learn a significant combination of words. "by self" Sometimes they are said proudly as when the toddler pushes the button on the remote control and the great big garage door opens up. "All by Self". Or perhaps they are said at a time of frustrated determination as they struggle to put on an article of clothing and refuse help by stating – "I do myself"! The child is trying out their skills and also trying to establish who they are in an adult world.

As children and then as adolescents and as adults we strive to create our own identities and then maintain them as we journey through life.

We encounter again this week, the camel hair wearing, locust and honey eating John the Baptist. Asked who are you? John identifies himself as a human witness to a cosmic event, a leader who is trying to show people the light.

If you were asked, “Who are you”? What would you answer? Think how you would answer. I guess it depends on who was asking the question. I would say I am a Lutheran minister. And I would also say I am a mother and a Nana, a cousin, a colleague, a neighbor, and a friend. We often identify ourselves by what we do or by our relationships.

John identifies himself in, through and by his relationship with Jesus. Even in his resolute claims about who he is not - and who he is – and why he John is here- is defined by and inseparable from the presence of the word made flesh in his midst. It is like he only knows how to articulate his identity in connection to Jesus identity. Being clear about what he is not - throws into sharp relief who John is; a witness to the light.

It’s really easy to forget that leadership is always in service to something else, something bigger than oneself. John is a leader. Why else would the religious authorities travel out to the desert to question him? He was what we now call an influencer, a leader, maybe even a potential ally or a potential threat. Perhaps they meant to challenge him or discredit him, or maybe even to persuade him.

Today we find influencers on websites, utube, facebook, or Tik Tok, Instagram or on Tweets, podcasts or blogs. The point I am trying to make is that it is possible to lead from anywhere; from your standing in your family, your work, your church, your retirement and in all facets of life; from a variety of places. Anyone can lead from anywhere; as long as the fundamental commitment is to the whole idea or organization.

The man John, of the third Sunday of Advent, is the John that points to Jesus and says “Behold – did you see Him? It’s the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John encourages us to put our faith into action by pointing to and participating in something greater than ourselves. Our worth and value isn’t something that has to be earned or proved, but rather has already been given to us as a gift from Christ, the one to whom John points.

In his book, *Christmas a Candid History*, Bruce Forbes provides a helpful summary of the importance of light for early celebrations of Jesus birth. In the dead of winter, in the midst of darkest and the shortest days of the year, festivals of light were essential. John’s first declaration of the incarnation, that the light of the world is continually shining when darkness should prevail, speaks to a fundamental need for light. Before there is the word made flesh, there is the promise that in the midst of all the darkness of humanity, a light will shine.

In 2020 how do we define ourselves or how do we identify ourselves as witnesses to the light which shines in the darkness in our world?

We are witnesses to the light when we as a faith family shine our lights in the local community. When we help out our local food banks so that all in need may have a Christmas dinner. When we care for our own property –our neighbors take notice. When you ask for prayers for a member of your family or your friends it shines light. When you gather in a restaurant and you pray before the meal it shines a light. When you send items overseas to third world countries –it shines a light. The list continues . . .

All of us who attend Advent services either in person or virtually are witnesses and influencers. We carry Christ's light out with us from this service back out into an often-indifferent world. We - like John the Baptist are witness to Jesus Christ the Holy One. The light of the world. We make a difference, together, by the grace of God. We take our light out into world, you in your small corner and I in mine. Amen.

**Hymn: ELW 255 -There's a Voice in the Wilderness
Our Response**

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 the People led by Maureen Rueckwald

God of power and might, shine your radiance 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, technical producers, 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 storms. 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. We remember those we know in our prayers. Make your church a place of refuge and healing. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

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.**

THE PEACE OF CHRIST BE WITH YOU ALWAYS.

OFFERING PRAYER

God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we might proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✙ one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

Amen.

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Reconciling God,

We confess that we do not trust your abundance, and we deny your presence in our lives. We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts. We fail to believe that you provide enough for all. We abuse your good creation for our own benefit. We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us. We sin in thought, word, and deed. By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us; and in your Spirit, lead us; so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God,

by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through ✙ Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DIALOGUE P88

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.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name.

In the night in which he was betrayed,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the 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 for the remembrance of me.

The 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.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who will be fed with this heavenly food, the body of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

Please take this time now at home to share with each other our Lord's Supper.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of the welcome table, in this meal we have feasted on your goodness and have been united by your presence among us. Empower us to go forth sustained by these gifts so that we may share your neighborly love with all, through Jesus Christ, the giver of abundant life. **Amen.**

HYMN: ELW 248 - People Look East

Blessing

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God, the creator, ✝ Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.

Communion Hymn: ELW 276 / LBW 44 - Infant Holy, Infant Lowly