

Morning Worship

Third Sunday of Advent



December 13, 2020 (Online)

Ring of the Bell

Our Life Together

Prelude Music

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

¹⁶ Celebrate always, ¹⁷ pray constantly, and ¹⁸ give thanks *to God* no matter what circumstances you find yourself in. (This is God's will for all of you in Jesus the Anointed.) ¹⁹ Don't suppress the Spirit. ²⁰ Don't downplay prophecies. ²¹ Take a close look at everything, *test it*, then cling to what is good. ²² Put away every form of evil.

²³ So now, may the God of peace *make you His own* completely *and* set you apart from the rest. May your spirit, soul, and body be preserved, kept intact and wholly free from any sort of blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus the Anointed. ²⁴ For the God who calls you is faithful, and He can *be trusted* to make it so.

Light the first, second and third candles:

O Holy One, we light this third candle,
And delight in the sparkle of its outrageous reminder
to "rejoice"!

Let its flame cast light into shadowy places
and show where work is to be done.

Let a community of builders be formed in
The Light of Joy.

Let Joy find home in our hearts,

And make space for your presence there,
As we work for justice and peace in the service of Love.

People: God be with us in this Light of Joy.

Call to Worship

Rejoice!

The spirit of God is sending us:

People:

to bring good news to the oppressed,
to comfort the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
to proclaim the year of favor among God's people.

Rejoice!

The work of the Spirit is calling us:

People:

To rebuild ancient relationships ruined by injustice,
To repair the cities as places of hope,
To restore land devastated across generations.
to proclaim the year of favor among God's people.

Rejoice!

The Glory of the Spirit is leading us:

People:

To cast off any faint spirit
and put on the mantle of praise,
To take root as the plantings of the HOLY ONE,
to display God's glory.

Come, let us worship in Joy!

Prayer of Invocation

**Holy God of Joy,
 We rejoice in the reality of who you are.
 We live within the joy of your love for us.
 Our contentment comes and goes.
 Our happiness ebbs and flows.
 Our feelings depend upon our circumstances,
 our physical health, our brain chemistry.
 But our *joy* is deeply rooted
 in our identity as your beloved children.
 And we give you thanks. Amen.**

Call to Confession

God's promise to us is eternal. God wishes to bless us with hope, with joy, with life. But our desires lead us to reject God and these blessings. Let us confess how too often we choose the path of tears, rather than the joy which can lead us to God's heart.

Confession

**God, you share with us words of hope, words of Good News.
 But sometimes we are unable to hear them
 because the source is too familiar.
 You call us to share the Good News with those around us.
 But sometimes we are unable to share,
 because the people know us too well.
 You encourage us to send messengers to other places
 where they will be heard better.
 But we can be jealous,
 wanting the Good News to be for us, not them.**

In the multitude of ways we can and have subverted

**your message of freedom and healing,
in all the ways we have kept the Jubilee year from happening,
we have left the path of true wisdom
and call upon your Grace to lead us back on track.**

...time of silent prayer...

Assurance

Go, and take God's Good News to others:

to those held captive by sin;
to those cradling broken hearts;
to those grieving lost relationships.

God forgives us all and makes us new.

Even as we rejoice in God's mercy, we will tell everyone we meet, "God has done such wondrous things for us, and wants to do the same for you!" Thanks be to God! Amen.

Advent Litany: Gaudete (Unison)

Because Christmas is almost here
Because dancing fits so well with music
Because inside baby clothes are miracles.
Gaudete!

Because some people love you
Because of chocolate
Because pain does not last forever
Because Santa Claus is coming.
Gaudete!

Because of laughter
Because there really are angels
Because your fingers fit your hands
Because forgiveness is yours for the asking

Because of children
 Because of parents.
 Gaudete!

Because the blind see.
 And the lame walk.
 Gaudete!

Because lepers are clean
 And the deaf hear.
 Gaudete!

Because the dead will live again
 And there is good news for the poor.
 Gaudete!

Because of Christmas
 Because of Jesus
 We rejoice!

Scripture

Psalm 126

126 ¹⁻³ It seemed like a dream, too good to be true,
 when GOD returned Zion's exiles.
 We laughed, we sang,
 we couldn't believe our good fortune.
 We were the talk of the nations –
 "GOD was wonderful to them!"
 GOD *was* wonderful to us;
 we are one happy people.

4⁶ And now, GOD, do it again –
 bring rains to our drought-stricken lives
 So those who planted their crops in despair
 will shout hurrahs at the harvest,
 So those who went off with heavy hearts
 will come home laughing, with armloads of blessing.

John 1:6-8, 19-28

6⁸ There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light.

19²⁰ When Jews from Jerusalem sent a group of priests and officials to ask John who he was, he was completely honest. He didn't evade the question. He told the plain truth: "I am not the Messiah."

21 They pressed him, "Who, then? Elijah?"

"I am not."

"The Prophet?"

"No."

22 Exasperated, they said, "Who, then? We need an answer for those who sent us. Tell us something – anything! – about yourself."

23 "I'm thunder in the desert: 'Make the road straight for God!' I'm doing what the prophet Isaiah preached."

24²⁵ Those sent to question him were from the Pharisee party. Now they had a question of their own: "If you're neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet, why do you baptize?"

²⁶⁻²⁷ John answered, “I only baptize using water. A person you don’t recognize has taken his stand in your midst. He comes after me, but he is not in second place to me. I’m not even worthy to hold his coat for him.”

²⁸ These conversations took place in Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing at the time.

Morning Message

Pastor Jim

Morning Prayer

Symbolic Offering

In struggle and in joy, God is faithful to us.
We bring forth our offerings – our tithes, our treasures, our least coins –
to demonstrate our faithfulness to God.

Offertory Music

Dedication

**Ever-present and loving God,
your Word tells us to cast our cares on you because you care for us.
In faith and trust we present these gifts, and ourselves, to you.
Bless and multiply them to meet the needs,
both hidden and apparent, of your beloved ones.
Inspire each of us to live as Christ’s witnesses,
today and ever more.
By the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.**

Benediction

Leader: In all our traveling
All: May your footsteps guide us

Leader: In our journeying to work and returning
All: May your footsteps guide us

Leader: Within our homes and families
All: May your footsteps guide us

Leader: In our leisure time together
All: May your footsteps guide us

Leader: In difficult situations and conflict
All: May your footsteps guide us

Leader: As we stumble on the way
All: May your footsteps guide us

Leader: In the travelling of our faith
All: May your footsteps guide us

Leader: As we place our trust in you
**All: May your footsteps guide us. In all our travelling, Lord,
 may it be your footsteps in which we place our feet.**

*Three-fold Amen

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*Postlude

