

Morning Prayer 13th December 2020

The Third Sunday of Advent

with Christine Ghinn



Personal preparation before the service begins.
Please take time to remember
where you are, and why you are here.
Give thanks and become still
in the presence of God

Prelude

SoF 410 / ACF 94

O come, O come, Emmanuel
https://youtu.be/7xtpJ4Q_Q-4

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, our Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

CCLI Song # 31982
John Mason Neale
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Welcome in the name of Christ.
God's grace, mercy and peace be with you
and also with you.

This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

The Advent Wreath

Lord Jesus, light of the world,
John told the people to prepare,
for you were very near.
As Christmas grows closer day by day,
help us to be ready to welcome you now.
Amen.

<https://youtu.be/paAISGnlqFE>

1. Light one candle for hope,
one bright candle for hope.
He brings hope to every heart.
He comes! He comes!

2. Light one candle for peace,
one bright candle for peace.
He brings peace to every
heart. He comes! He comes!

3. Light one candle for joy,
one bright candle for joy.
He brings joy to every heart.
He comes! He comes!

Words and music: Natalie Sleeth

Let us pray with Mary's words

The Song of Mary *Magnificat*

Luke 1:46-55

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;
for he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.

**From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his
Name.**

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

**He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.**

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

**He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.**

He has come to the help of his servant Israel,
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

**The promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:

**as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever.
*Amen.***

The Collect for today, the Third Sunday of Advent

God for whom we watch and wait,
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your
Son:
give us courage to speak the truth,
to hunger for justice,

and to suffer for the cause of right,
with Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The reading is taken from Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God
Our hearts and our minds are open

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Homily

Advent 2020 is to me a particularly hard time for 'adulting' and staying calm & sane. Granted, all those cancelled Christmas parties bring a certain relief, yet that is more than made for by the other facets of this pandemic. Watching rising infection numbers and feeling powerless, threatened and fragile is certainly taking a toll on me. Add the usual family craziness, the suffering of loved ones, all the politics

and a climate crisis into the mix, and you understand why the hope, peace, joy and love that the advent candles announce ring to my ears more like a mocking than an encouragement.

Yet, there is a small consolation in knowing that it's not just me, who is trying to keep the overwhelm at bay. Many struggle with the pandemic even more than I do: be it with social isolation, financial worries, sickness or death. Society has to deal with more than a virus, but also with a continuous spread of harmful ideologies and the effects of climate destruction seem to get out of control just as corona infection numbers are. There were always people who had a tough advent season, but this year it seems to be a much more universal experience.

Amongst all this mess, today's biblical protagonists take the stage.

Pregnant Mary's cheerfulness from our opening prayer seems a bit out of place when she sings:

"my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and
has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty."

Enter Isaiah.

"he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."
Can his utopian vision cut through the apathy?

And finally, John the Baptist is rewarded by more booing than applause when he proclaims:

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord, (...)
Among you stands one whom you do not know, the
one who is coming after me;"

Throughout centuries, Christians of many denominations have been challenged and encouraged by this Sunday's command to "Rejoice!". The call to 'Joy' is not a gentle suggestion, but a prescription. It is

echoed all through scripture and given center stage on this Third Sunday in Advent.

I guess we are all aware, that it's not just a happy-clappy feeling, we are invited into here. Both bible commentaries and psychologists are describing joy as a feeling of delight or an exultation of the spirit arising from a sense of well-being or satisfaction. It is not depended on outer circumstances, but springs from within an individual.

Joy can grow in the gap between despair and happiness. Joy withstands the tension that exists in a world full of imperfection, yet is at the same time the dwelling place of Emmanuel – God With Us. Joy is a crucial building block of the Kingdom of God that is 'Already' and 'Not Yet'.

This morning we are called to cultivate joy as an act of worship. As much as God is the source of our rejoicing, he is also the recipient of it. Moreover, his joy enables us to brighten up the lives of those around us. Joy gives expression to God's presence in this world and it fuels us in our daily lives.

If you are one of the people that have found the doom-and-gloom talk at the beginning exaggerated, then you might, in fact, be part of the rescue from joylessness in those around you. Be gentle with the broken-hearted, but don't be silenced. Be patient with the suffering, and faithfully join into Mary's song, continue Isaiah's vision casting and speak up as John the Baptist did.

Likewise, let the rest of us show grace towards those ridiculously cheerful ones. When we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel, sometimes all that's required of us is to surrender, and lean into the joy of others.

Following in the footsteps of our three bible characters, Christians have developed and used many other strategies to encounter God in their day-to-day, and thus nurse their joy back to health. Perhaps you and I can learn from them.

One strategy is sharing life with others, be it in communal worship or prayer, acts of service or fellowship around the table or elsewhere.

Then there is individual prayer.

Many people also find spiritual practices to be very effective at fostering joy in the everyday: things like meditation and contemplation, but also activities such as painting, cycling or gardening.

Maybe some of you are more the musical type and find nothing more soothing than a choral piece, worship music or the sound of that cheesy Christmas pop song that never ceases to bring a smile to your face.

Please feel encouraged to explore and lean into the tools you find most helpful. It's time well invested. Trust in the process and keep your eyes, ears and hearts open to catch that gentle flicker of joy in yourself and in those around you.

Imagine what the next few weeks and the rest of this long corona-winter would look and feel like if we would take the command "Rejoice!!!" to heart. Each of us would be able to spread hope in this polarised and exhausted world and would, in turn, have others to lean on when the going gets tough. May we all nurture joy in our communities and in ourselves during this ongoing time of advent – the time of waiting for The Christ.

Amen.

Intercessions (by Wolfgang)

As Christmas is drawing near, the texts in the lectures are becoming more positive in outlook and optimistic in the hopes they express. Unfortunately, in our current situation, the garments of salvation still look suspiciously like the face-masks we wear in public.

Lord, give us the resilience of mind and spirit to trudge on through another lockdown

Lord in your mercy ...

As Christmas is drawing near, help us not to forget that we are wearing these masks, and sitting in our homes rather than visit Christmas markets, primarily not to

SoF 520 Tell out, my soul
<https://youtu.be/s6ji4y9Q-K0>

3. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

4. Tell out, my soul, the glories of His Word!
Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure:
tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!

CCLI Song # 27051
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The Blessing

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing;
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always!

The Conclusion

People of God: return!
You are called to be God's own.
From the mountains announce the good news.
God comes in justice and peace,
to all who follow his ways.
You are God's children.

**Lord, make us one in the peace of Christ
today and for ever.**

Let's go in peace
to love and serve the Lord



**In the name of Christ.
Amen.**

Postlude

Mary, did you know?
<https://youtu.be/JPsglhIYQmM>

Mary, did you know?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
would one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy
has come to make you new?
This Child that you delivered, will soon deliver you.

Mary, did you know that your baby boy
would give sight to the blind man?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
would calm a storm with His hand?
Did you know that your baby boy
has walked where angels trod?
And when you kiss your little baby
You've kissed the face of God?
Oh, Mary, did you know?

Ooh, Mary, did you know, ooh, ooh?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear,
the dead will live again;
the lame will leap, the dumb will speak
the praises of the Lamb.

Oh, Mary, did you know that your baby boy
is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
will one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy
is heaven's perfect Lamb
and the sleeping Child you're holding
Is the great I AM?
Oh, Mary, oh.

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Buddy Greene | Mark Lowry
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