**MODIFIED SERVICE- The 1st Sunday of Advent, November 29,2020**

**ZION EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH, PHLIPSBURG**

**Lighting of the advent wreath: Hope-** Rev. Karen Ware Jackson\*

We light one candle for hope. Because the world is broken, and the wait is long but hope just won’t let go. Hope holds space for all our longings lingers on the edge of harsh reality like the dawn gently awakening the sky. “keep awake,” she whispers, “for the world is being made new.” So, we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

Welcome to everyone on this the 1st Sunday of Advent, where we continue to gather safely from the comfort of our homes as a reminder of our love for one another. Can you believe that it is the end of November! Where has the time gone!

Thanks to the Bond family for reading the Advent litany this morning!

Our Christmas edition of the Messenger will go out tomorrow.

Our GotoMeeting Coffee hour meets at 11:00, please join us!

As we enter the last month of 2020, please remember that Zion relies on your continued support each week to meet our monthly expenses. Thank you to all who support and pray for our congregation.

Throughout this service and the season of Advent we will be using worship resources prepared by the Resumption of In-Person Task Force. We give thank to the Rev. Karen Ware Jackson for the Advent litany and to Pastor Doug Reble, Assistant to the Bishop for the prayer of the day.

**GATHERING**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**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.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY-** Rev Doug Reble

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who comes to us again and again through the marvels of nature, in the person of Jesus, through the voice of conscience, and through your Spirit that dwells within us. Make us receptive during these days of Advent to your still, small voice that calls us from childishness to childlikeness, from fear to faith, from greed to generosity, and from a life that is self-centered to one that is centered in you, the Ground of our Being. For we want our lives to reflect the spirit of the one whose birth will soon be celebrated. In Christ's name. **Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN-Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn**- **ELW 242**

1 Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn,  
for angels herald its dawning.  
Sing out your joy, for soon he is born,  
behold! the Child of our longing.  
Come as a baby weak and poor,  
to bring all hearts together,  
he opens wide the heav'nly door  
and lives now inside us forever.  
  
2 To us, to all in sorrow and fear,  
Emmanuel comes a-singing,  
his humble song is quiet and near,  
yet fills the earth with its ringing;  
music to heal the broken soul  
and hymns of lovingkindness,  
the thunder of his anthems roll  
to shatter all hatred and blindness.  
  
3 In darkest night his coming shall be,  
when all the world is despairing,  
as morning light so quiet and free,  
so warm and gentle and caring.  
Then shall the mute break forth in song,  
the lame shall leap in wonder,  
the weak be raised above the strong,  
and weapons be broken asunder.  
  
4 Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night,  
though dark the winter and cheerless,  
the rising sun shall crown you with light,  
be strong and loving and fearless.  
Love be our song and love our prayer  
and love our endless story;  
may God fill ev'ry day we share  
and bring us at last into glory.

**WORD**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 64:1-9**

A reading from Isaiah.

1O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—2as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!  
 3When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.4From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.5You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways.  
But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.  
 6We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.  
 7There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.  
 8Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

9Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever.

Now consider, we are all your people.

**PSALM: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19**

1Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.  
2In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin,  and Manasseh, stir up your strength and  come to help us.  
3Restore us, O God; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.  
4O Lord God of hosts, how long will your anger fume when your people pray?   
5You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have given them bowls of  tears to drink.  
 6You have made us the derision of our neighbors, and our enemies laugh us to scorn.  
 7Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.  
 17Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one you have made so strong for yourself.   
 18And so will we never turn away from you; give us life, that we may call upon your name.  
 19Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

**SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

3Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
 4I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, 5for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—6just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—7so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**GOSPEL: Mark 13:24-37**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

[Jesus said:] 24“In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.  
26Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. 27Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.  
  28“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.  
  32“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. 34It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, 36or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON**

Our first reading that Chrissie read from Isaiah this morning really resonated with me this week, and I wonder if it did with any of you? The opening lines of the passage “O that you would tear open the heavens and come down so that the mountains would quake at your presence—as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil”(Isa. 64 -2a), made me think about all that has happened this past year. Because in 2020, I have felt much like the prophet Isaiah did. I too have cried out to God, asking for God’s presence, asking for God to intervene, lamenting for God to show up and fix our world that seems so broken and in need of healing both figuratively and literally. I have waited for the proverbial mountains to quake; I have waited for some sign to show me that God is indeed near in all that is going on around us.

Isaiah is speaking of the exile or exodus of the Israelites. In the times of the Old Testament, God showed up. God rescued Israel from Egypt when God parted the Red Sea. God made manna fall from the heavens to feed God’s people in the wilderness. God made water appear out of a stone when God’s people were thirsting for something to drink. Throughout time and history, God’s people have struggled and waited, and God always showed up. Isaiah is waiting for God to show up again, for God to manifest God’s self bringing hope and freedom to all.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. A time of waiting, a time of watching and praying, and a time of reflection. Usually, the season of Advent is a busy one…choirs form to rehearse beloved Christmas carols and children participate in Christmas concerts and pageants. Folks are running from store to store buying the latest gadgets and checking names off their Christmas lists. People purchase new outfits and attend Christmas parties. Kitchens are busy with cookies and treats being prepared to take to family get-togethers and meals. This year, Christmas will be decidedly different. For many this year, Christmas will be quiet. There will be few parties, stores will not be crammed full of people enjoying (well maybe tolerating) the hustle and bustle of the approaching holiday season, and extended family get-togethers will not take place. Yes, the holiday season will be different this year.

We wait in the season of Advent to celebrate the birth of a tiny babe who changed the world; we wait for God to show up. But this year we are also waiting for so much more. We are waiting for this pandemic to end. We are waiting to reconnect with family and friends. We are waiting to hug one another. We are waiting to gather in church together, and many are waiting for a vaccine. All of us are waiting for our lives to return to some kind of normalcy, to some kind of certainty.

In our gospel reading this morning, Jesus informed the disciples of the need to stay awake and be alert. In staying alert and awake, Jesus is asking the disciples to wait. He says this in response to a question asked earlier in the gospel by some of the disciples. Jesus and the disciples are sitting outside of the temple at the Mount of Olives. They have just left the temple, and the disciples notice the size and beauty of the temple. The stones which were used to build the temple were massive and intricately laid. Jesus goes on to tell the disciples that the temple will be destroyed, not one stone will be left upon another (Mark 13:2). The disciples want to know when this will happen and what will be the sign. Jesus’ response does not answer the question. He states that times will be difficult, there will be persecution and betrayal. He tells them to wait, to stay awake and be alert for the timing is unknown. But, after the suffering, the Son of Man will descend from the clouds, just as the prophet Isaiah stated. There is hope in the waiting! There is renewal of life, and there is promise for the future just like the new leaves and branches on the fig tree in summer. God will show up. God does not abandon us.

The doubts that I feel and that you may feel as well in these uncertain times are okay. God has big enough shoulders to hold the doubt that we carry. And often, when we take the time to reflect on our doubts we can see that God does indeed show up in our lives giving us the signs we desire. God shows up in the unexpected phone calls and texts of a friend simply checking in to see how we are doing. God shows up in sending Christmas cards to one another offering wishes of peace and Christmas blessings. God shows up in scientists working tirelessly to prepare and test vaccines. God shows up in praying for one another, in lifting one another up when we are feeling down. God shows up in butterflies, in the purple, orange, and pink hues of a blazing sunset. God shows up in snowflakes falling gently in the night sky. God is all around us, and God is in us. God is the potter who is continually forming and moulding us into the image of God through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. God is the parent who never leaves us, who lets us make our own decisions, whether they be right or wrong. God does not judge the decisions that we make; we do a pretty good job of that ourselves! God forgives our iniquities; God forgives our sins. God shows up.

So, let us wait in this Advent season and in the year 2020. Let us hold onto the steadfast hope and promise of a loving God who knows our pain, who holds our doubt, who is continually moulding God’s creation into something new. May we use this time of Advent to reflect on what it means to be beloved children of God in the year 2020. May we think of new ways to love our neighbour, in forgiving one another as we have been forgiven, in loving unconditionally and waiting with joy and trust for renewal and hope for the future. Let it be so. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY- Wait for the Lord**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7GexIvX8HU>

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

As the dark awaits the dawn, so we await the One who is to come. Let us pray together in expectation: for creation, for our communities, and for all those 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. Restore us O God, **let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

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. Restore us O God, **let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

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. Restore us O God, **let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

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. Restore us O God, **let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

We pray for the people in our families and congregation who live with illness and injury, depression, anxiety, chronic pain, addiction, and other invisible illnesses. Ease their suffering and support them when they struggle. We especially remember Eddie, Elaine, Susie, Ruth, Donelda, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Alea, Stephanie, Joe, Greg, and those we name in the stillness of our hearts. Restore us O God, **let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

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. Restore us O God, **let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

Let us pray.

Holy God,

the Beginning and the Ending, our Hope as we wait, we praise you for joining us to your people of old. We bless you for your prophets who call us to righteousness and promise a new earth with peace for all. For the Word of your covenant, we thank you, O God. **We thank you, O God***.*

We praise you for the coming of Jesus our Lord, who lifts up the lowly, heals the suffering world, and proclaims your way of mercy and truth.

For your Word who is Christ, we magnify you, O God. **We magnify you, O God.**

Send your Spirit on all who receive your Word. Nurture our faith with your grace, accompany us with your might, and empower our zeal for your justice and joy.

For your Word through the church, we praise you, O God. **We praise you, O God.**

All praise to you, holy God, today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen. **Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**BLESSING**

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

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**SENDING SONG*-*Soon and Very Soon- ELW 439**

Chorus: Soon and very soon,

We are going to see the king,

Soon and very soon,

We are going to see the king.

Soon and very soon,

We are going to see the king,

Hallelujah, hallelujah,

We are going to see the king.

1. No more crying there,

We are going to see the king,

No more crying there,

We are to going see the king.

No more crying there,

We are going to see the king,

Hallelujah, hallelujah,

We are going to see the king.

2. No more dying there,

We are to going see the king,

No more dying there,

We are going o see the king.

No more dying there,

We are to going see the king,

Hallelujah, hallelujah,

We are going to see the king.

\*Karen Ware Jackson, 2020. Permission is granted for home and congregational use

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