**MODIFIED SERVICE- The 3rd Sunday of Advent, December 13,2020**

**ZION EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH, PHLIPSBURG**

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

Light one candle for joy.

Because the world is broken and the wait is long, but our joy cannot be contained.

Like a toddler, toppling the thrones of power with a gleeful swipe,

 joy pierces our silence with song interrupts our sighing with laughter, and

unshackles our fumbling feet to dance.

“My soul magnifies the Lord,” she whispers, “and my Spirit rejoices in God my savior.”

So, we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

Welcome to everyone on this the 3rd Sunday of Advent, where we continue to gather safely from the comfort of our homes as a reminder of our love for one another.

Thank you to the Doering family for reciting our Advent litany this week!

We have had stable weather this past week, the sun was wonderful to see! There was a beautiful sunset on Thursday night, I missed it, but pictures on social media were beautiful!

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

Holy Communion will take place during the service today, I invite you to gather some bread and wine or juice into your worship space if you have not already done so.

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. If you wish to mail (to the home of Treasurer Mark Doering)in a donation please do so within the next week so that it arrives before year end. One can also phone Gwen K to arrange to drop it off at the church. If you need a donation picked up, please call me, or any council member.

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 thanks to the Rev. Karen Ware Jackson for the Advent litany, Deacon Sherry Coman for the prayer of the day, and the Rev. Tanya Ramer for the Eucharistic Prayer.

**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-** Deacon Sherry Coman

Gracious God,

Creation awaits the coming of your son in wonder. Abide with us in our anticipation and longing. And help us to embrace your mystery. Teach us to open our hearts to you in preparation for new life. Help us to look for you, like the long streaks of light across an early dawn sea. And guide us always toward the knowledge and love of you.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

**GATHERING SONG*Christ, Be Our Light* (ELW 715)**

1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Refrain
Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice. Refrain

3 Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed. Refrain

4 Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone. Refrain

5 Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
signs of your kingdom come. Refrain

**WORD**

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

**PSALM:  Alternate Reading- Luke 1:46b-55**

46bMy soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,47my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: 49you, the Almighty, have done great things for me and holy is your name.50You have mercy on those who fear you, from generation to generation. 51You have shown strength with your arm and scattered the proud in their conceit,52casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly.
53You have filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.
54You have come to the aid of your servant Israel, to remember the promise of mercy,
55the promise made to our forbears, to Abraham and his children forever.

**SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

16Rejoice always, 17pray without ceasing, 18give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19Do not quench the Spirit. 20Do not despise the words of prophets, 21but test everything; hold fast to what is good; 22abstain from every form of evil. 23May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

**GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28**

The holy gospel according to John.

6There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.
 19This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” 20He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” 21And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” 22Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” 23He said,“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ ”as the prophet Isaiah said.
24Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” 26John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, 27the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” 28This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON**

Today we celebrate the third week of Advent. It is also called the Gaudate, meaning Rejoice in Latin. In this time of Advent, we wait. We wait in anticipation. We wait in joy for the light of Christ that continues to enter into our world. Through our faith, we are witnesses to that light, and it enables and enlivens us to live into the light of Christ through loving others as we are loved. Our readings today introduce us to other witnesses of Christ’s light in the world.

 Last week in our gospel reading from Luke, we were introduced to John the Baptist in his role as a baptizer and messenger. This week, we meet John again in the Gospel of John, but this time his role is that of a witness. John 1:7-10 states, “He came as a witness to testify to the light so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.” In the reading, the Jewish authorities were concerned about the identity of this man who was in the world, but yet the world did not know him. Was it John, himself, the one he had spoken of? So, they sent some priests and Levites to find out just who John really was. And I had to smile when John answered the priests and Levites because he did not answer the question, he replied with who he was not. John like Jesus does not like to give straight answers! He was not the Messiah, he was not Elijah (even though he dressed just like him), and he was not a prophet. John proclaimed that was sent forth as a witness to point the way towards the Son of God, to point the way towards Jesus, the light within a dark and broken world, a light that would not be overcome. His words were prophetic, but he was not a prophet. He spoke in truth and humility.

 Our alternate Psalm this morning is the Magnificat, or Mary’s Song where Mary sings her praise and joy to God. The Magnificat is the longest set of words spoken by a woman in the New Testament, an unmarried, pregnant, teenager at that! I want to let that sit with you for a few moments. The fact that God chose Mary, speaks to who God is in our world, speaks to the grace and mercy of a loving and just God in our world.

 Now, Mary was a witness as well. She was a witness to God’s unconditional love in the world when she was visited by the angel Gabriel and told that she was highly favoured in the eyes of God and that she would bear a son and name him Jesus. She was touched by the divine power and presence of God. This humble teenage unmarried woman is carrying the light of the world in her womb. Like John, Mary was a true servant of God. Her soul magnified the Lord and her spirit rejoiced in God her Saviour. Mary sang of the love and justice that God has for the world, in showing God’s strength, in showing God’s mercy, and love for those who are oppressed. In antiquity, more than 97% of the population lived in extreme poverty. Mary’s Song of Praise spoke right to them, it spoke of a new trust and hope in God so that all could enjoy the goodness that God provides. Can you imagine hearing these words of hope from an unmarried, pregnant teenager? Would you have believed them? That is the radical love and presence of God in our lives. That is God turning the world upside down and inside out.

 I mentioned last week that we as Christians are called to be messengers of God in the world. We are called to love our neighbour; we are called to tell of our love for God to one another. We are also called to be witnesses of God in our world today. We are called to share our stories of how God has worked in and around our lives testifying to the light of Christ. We are called to be in relationship with one another. We are called to be in community with one another in an increasingly individualistic and consumer-driven world. In witnessing to the light of Christ, we confess that we are stronger together when we work together, when we nurture one another in care and love despite our differences. We are stronger together as witnesses when we act humanely towards one another offering compassion and justice so that all can live in the light of Jesus Christ. When we bear witness to the light of Christ, the darkness in our world becomes brighter, we grow in faith and understanding, and we live in the sure and certain hope for things to come.

 So, on this 3rd Sunday of Advent, let us proclaim the greatness of our God. Let us love one another as we have been loved. Let us continue to be witnesses to all that God has done and continues to do in our world through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of God’s only Son, Jesus Christ. Let us be brave and courageous like the witness of Mary and John, using our voices and actions to spread the light of Jesus Christ in a weary world with joy, justice, and praise. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY *My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness* (ELW251)**

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FG19-\_XmnOk**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FG19-_XmnOk)

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

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, 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 storm. 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, injured or ill. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. Make your church a place of refuge and healing. We especially remember Eddie, Elaine, Susie, Ruth, Donelda, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Alea, Stephanie, Joe, Greg, Larry, and those we name in the stillness of our hearts. 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.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**MEAL**

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

**EUCHARISTIC PRAYER-** Rev Tanya Ramer

God of hopeful expectation, who enters into our stories,

who births new life into creation, who invites us into a rich and restoring relationship.

We come before you with humble hearts, to greet you in our midst.

You were there when creation burst into being, with endless possibilities.

You were there when the Israelites tasted liberty, and you opened their eyes to new freedom.

You were there, with Mary, when she became a powerful vessel and witness, to birth love into the world.

You were there with Jesus when he prayed in the garden, when he confronted death and brought resurrection life to your people.

And you are with us now, as we gather at your table;

Your meal and gift of love for all who come hungry and thirsty today.

We come, like those first disciples,

gathered around the table to hear Jesus’ words of promise and hope.

On the night that he last ate with his disciples,

Jesus took bread, 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.

When the meal had finished, Jesus took the cup of wine,

gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new promise of life and love, poured out for all of you,

for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering his birth, his life, his death and his resurrection, we offer these fruits of creation, bread and wine, and ourselves in grateful service.

Thank you for your Spirit who works in and among us, in times of hope-filled anticipation. Who strengthens and sustains us, and who, challenges and prods us.

Who gives us life and continues to surprise us with extravagant grace.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

All honour and glory are yours, almighty God, now and forever. 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.**

**INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Even as we watch and wait, Christ is here. Come, eat and drink.

**COMMUNION**

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you. Amen.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Let us pray.

God for whom we wait, in this meal you give us a foretaste of that day when the hungry will be fed with good things. Send us forth to make known your deeds and to proclaim the greatness of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**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 and joy. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**SENDING SONG*Joy to the World* (ELW 267)**

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her king;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 No more let sin and sorrow grow
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

4 He rules the world with truth and grace
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

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

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