
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 16, 2018

THEME OF THE DAY... “Rejoice in the Lord always!” may seem like quite the daunting task in today’s world. Yes, there are moments of joy, but there are also moments of tragedy and devastation. It is not possible to be always joyful. But rejoicing is not a task that we have to add to our to-do list. And we are not called to rejoice in everything always. We are called to rejoice in the Lord always. The God who rejoices over us with gladness and calms us with His love brings us into a relationship with Him that is filled with rejoicing at His presence and providence.

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

INVOCATION AND CALL TO WORSHIP

P: Let us worship God as children—

C: With wonder and awe.

P: Let us worship God as youth—

C: With questions and eager hearts.

P: Let us worship God as adults—

C: With gratitude and praise.

P: Let us worship God as elders—

C: With wisdom and hope.

P: Let the body of Christ sing praises to God—

C: Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

P: From whom all blessings flow!

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

P: On the four Sundays in Advent, we light a new candle each week. We mark the four candles with these four words: hope, peace, joy, and love.

P: Jesus Christ is the hope of all nations.

C: We wait for the Lord, and in His Word do we hope.

P: Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace,

C: We wait for the Lord, and in His Word do we rest.

P: Jesus Christ is the source of all joy.

C: We wait for the Lord, and in His Word do we rejoice.

The first, second and third candles are lit during the Advent Song.

ADVENT SONG: “My Soul in Stillness Waits”

C: For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits; truly my joy is in you.

P: O Spring of Joy, rain down upon our spirits, our thirsty hearts are yearning for your Word, come, make us whole, be comfort to our hearts.

C: For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits; truly my joy is in you.

WE CONFESS OUR SINS...

P: In the season of Advent, we prepare for Jesus to come. While today is a celebration of joy, we know that on our own, we would be entirely devoid of joy. Without Christ's intervention and incarnation, we would be lost in torment forever. We approach God in reverence, mindful of how unworthy we are to be in God's presence.

Silence for reflection

P: Heavenly Father,

C: we confess that we have doubted Your Son and His power. We have been filled with anxiety and stress. Revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You.

...HEARING GOD'S FORGIVENESS

P: The Lord God is in Your midst, the mighty One who will save us. In Christ's death and resurrection, God withdrew His wrath and put away His burning anger. He rejoices over you with singing and quiets your anxious hearts by His love. Hear these words of forgiveness, for they are from Jesus. Your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

SERVICE OF THE WORD

THE SCRIPTURE LESSONS:

The First Lesson:

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The Gospel Lesson:

Luke 7:18-35

The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written,

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.’

I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”
(When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

“To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another,

“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.’

For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.”

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

CHOIR ANTHEM: “Prepare the Way”

By Joseph M. Martin

Prepare, prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare, prepare, prepare the way of the Lord. (Repeat)

Make straight in the desert a royal way;

Gather the people to sing and pray;

Lift up you voices with joyful praise.

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Let all of creation with song rejoice.

Sing ev’ry nation with heart and voice.

Sharing the promise with joyful noise.

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Alleluia. Alleluia.

Keep awake be ready dawn will soon be here.

Light will shine upon us, grace will dry each tear.

Hope, peace and love will fall from heav’n above!

Joy will come with morning. Prepare, the time is near.

Prepare the way for the Lord. (repeat to end)

SERMON

AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH

C: We believe in God, the Father Almighty,

Creator of heaven and earth.

We believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit

And born of the virgin Mary.

He 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,

And is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

The Christian Church

The communion of saints,

The forgiveness of sins,

The resurrection of the body,

And the life everlasting. Amen

OFFERING

We give our offerings as signs of our lives offered to God in humble thanks and service.

THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

P: Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

P: Dear heavenly Father, as we wait for the return of Jesus, we often grow impatient. We are tempted to disdain our families, dismiss our friends, and deny our neighbors what they need. Our hearts are often far from joy, but we pray that You would teach us to rejoice in the Lord always!

C: Again, I will say, rejoice!

P: Lord, in the midst of our rejoicing there is also sadness and struggle. Some among us are sick, injured, and recovering. (Today we pray for...) Provide them with healing and calm their troubled hearts. In the midst of their suffering, teach them to rejoice in the Lord always!

C: Again, I will say, rejoice!

P: Lord, it is most challenging to rejoice when we are surrounded by death. Comfort those who grieve and mourn the death of love ones. (Today we remember the families and friends of...) Place the hope of resurrection before their eyes. Remind them that in paradise we will all rejoice in the Lord always!

C: Again, I will say, rejoice!

P: Lord we thank You for the times rejoicing is common in our lives. (Today we rejoice with...) Grant that their rejoicing lead us all to rejoice in the Lord always!

C: Again, I will say, rejoice!

P: Lord, many are struggling with loneliness, especially at this time of year. Inspire Your Church to reach out in friendship and love to those who need it, that together we all rejoice in the Lord always!

C: Again, I will say, rejoice!

P: Into Your hands, Lord Jesus, we commend all for whom we pray,
trusting in Your ever-present mercy.

C: Amen.

THE INVITATION

P: Welcome to the celebration! God who supplies our every need has
given us this meal to share.

C: Lord, we thank You for the bread of eternal life.

P: We come to the table, acknowledging our shortcomings and our need
to experience Your presence in bread and wine.

C: Lord, we thank You for the bread of eternal life.

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

DISTRIBUTION

DISTRIBUTION HYMNS

“What a Friend”

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations, is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged, take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful who with all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In his arms he'll take and shield thee, thou wilt find a solace there.

“I’ve Got Peace Like a River”

1. I’ve got peace like a river,
I’ve got peace like a river,
I’ve got peace like a river in my soul.
I’ve got peace like a river,
I’ve got peace like a river,
I’ve got peace like a river in my soul.
2. I’ve got love like an ocean,
I’ve got love like an ocean,
I’ve got love like an ocean in my soul.
I’ve got love like an ocean,
I’ve got love like an ocean,
I’ve got love like an ocean in my soul.
3. I’ve got joy like a fountain,
I’ve got joy like a fountain,
I’ve got joy like a fountain in my soul.
I’ve got joy like a fountain,
I’ve got joy like a fountain,
I’ve got joy like a fountain in my soul.

CLOSING BLESSING

P: May our God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—pour out his grace upon your family, giving you triumph over temptation, joy in your journey, and deliverance over every form of darkness.

C: Amen.

CLOSING SONG: “Angels We Have Heard on High”

Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, Echoing their joyous strains,
Glo---o---ria in excelsis Deo; Glo----o----ria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be Which inspire your heav'nly song?
Glo---o---ria in excelsis Deo; Glo----o---ria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king.
Glo---o---ria in excelsis Deo; Glo----o---ria in excelsis Deo.

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace! Serve the Lord!

C: Thanks be to God!