

December 5, 2021
Bread for the Journey – Second Sunday in Advent
An Act of Joy: Angel Biscuits

PREWORSHIP MUSIC

*I've Got the Christmas Joy*¹

*Joy to the World*²

*The Visitation*³

PRELUDE

Heavenly Joy (Little)⁴

GREETING & ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING

Pastor: Today is the Third Sunday before Christmas, the Second Sunday on the new Christian calendar, in the season of Advent. The word “Advent” comes from Latin and means “coming.” It is a time when disciples prepare themselves for the coming of Jesus, as we remember his birth in Bethlehem long ago. Just as the season of Lent is a multi-week spiritual preparation before Easter, so Advent is recognized as a four-week spiritual preparation before Christmas.

Liturgist: Each of the four candles in the Advent wreath represent one Sunday before Christmas. The fifth – or white candle – representing Christ and his birth is placed in the wreath’s center, just as Jesus is to be at the center of our lives.

Congregation: **The wreath is circular. It has no beginning or end. This symbolizes the infinite nature of God as well as God’s eternal presence and unending love for us. The wreath is made of evergreen branches. These symbolize the everlasting life we have through our faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as our Savior.**

Pastor: Throughout the Old Testament, as early as the first book of Genesis, God promised to send a Savior into the world; One who would deliver and liberate God’s people. Reading from the book of Micah 5:2 we hear these prophetic words, “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf.”

Liturgist: Micah’s words, “But you, O Bethlehem” are delivered in a tone of honor. How beautifully fitting that our Lord would be born in the city of Bethlehem, a Hebrew name meaning “House of Bread.”

Congregation: **Our Savior, Jesus, was born in the “House of Bread.” Then, in his adult ministry, Jesus would proclaim, “I am the Bread of Life: Whoever comes to me will never hunger again. Whoever believes in me will never thirst.”**

Pastor: Not only was our Savior, the Bread of Life, born in the House of Bread, after his birth he was laid in a feeding trough from which the animals ate.

Liturgist: How interesting are the names given to places and people in the Bible! Matthew 1:21 reads, “And she will birth a son and name him Jesus; for he will save his people from their sins.”

Congregation: **“Jesus,” a name which means “he saves” was more than a name for the Son of God. It was WHAT he would do. Jesus came to save us from death. He would feed us words of life, liberate us from fear, save us from sin, rescue us from death and raise us to new life. This gives us JOY! Thanks, be to God!**

Pastor: God’s Holy Word is God’s promise, and the Promise of a Savior has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

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Liturgist: So, we light the first and second candles as acts of faith and joy; trusting that our Lord, the Bread of Life, born in the House of Bread, saves us from our sins. Let us pray together:

All: *Holy God, from the very beginning you knew that we could never walk this journey of life alone. Thank you for giving us Bread for the journey – in this life and the next. Thank you for the many times you have brought us out of trials, through suffering, and restored our brokenness. As the first Advent candle flickers with light, so you give us light in our darkness. Feed us again this Advent, that we might find our souls nourished, our spirits fed for the remainder of our days in this life, and into the next. Amen.*

HYMN

O Holy Night
(Verses 1 and 3, only)

Bulletin Insert

OLD TESTAMENT

1 Kings 17:12-16

RESPONSIVE READING OF PSALM 30

Liturgist: I will lift you up, O Lord, for you have lifted me out of the depths.

Congregation: You have not let those who hate me stand over me in joy.

Liturgist: Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you healed me.

Congregation: O Lord, you have brought me up from the grave.

Liturgist: You have kept me alive, so that I will not go down into the deep.

Congregation: Let all who belong to the Lord, sing praise to the Lord!

Let us give thanks to God's holy name.

Liturgist: God's anger lasts only a short time. But God's favor is for life.

Congregation: Crying and weeping may last for the night,
but JOY comes in the morning.

Liturgist: As for me, when all was going well, I said, "I will never be moved."

Congregation: O Lord, by your favor, you have made my mountain stand strong.
But when you hid your face, I was troubled.

Liturgist: I cried to you, O Lord. I begged for loving-kindness.

Congregation: I cried: What good will come if I go to the grave?

Will the dust thank you?

Will the dust proclaim your faithfulness?

Liturgist: Hear, O Lord and show me loving-kindness.

O Lord, be my Helper.

Congregation: You have turned my crying into dancing.

You have taken off my sackcloth of mourning and dressed me with joy.

Liturgist: My soul will sing praises to you, and not be quiet.

Congregation: O Lord my God, I will give thanks and praise to you forever.

EPISTLE READING

1 Corinthians 10:14-17

NEW TESTAMENT

Luke 3:1-6

SERMON

Joy Comes in the Morning
An Act of Joy: Angel Biscuits

Rev. Laura Bair-Baker

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Pastor: Having heard the Word of the Lord, anyone who feels called to follow Jesus as a new disciple, renew their commitment to Christ and unite with us in this household of faith, may come forward.

Pastor: Friends in Christ, we are all received into the church through the sacrament of baptism. These people have found nurture and support in the midst of the family of Christ. Through prayer, they have been led by the Holy Spirit to affirm their baptism and to claim in our presence their

covenantal relationship with Christ and the members of this church. They are here for service to Jesus Christ, using the gifts, which the Holy Spirit bestows.

Pastor: You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are equally citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus alone being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together, which grows into a holy temple in Christ – in whom you are also built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

QUESTIONS OF THE CANDIDATES

Pastor: Do you desire to be baptized and to affirm your baptism into the family of Jesus Christ?

Candidates: I do.

Pastor: Do you renounce the powers of evil and desire the freedom of new life in Christ?

Candidates: I do.

Pastor: Do you profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

Candidates: I do.

Pastor: Do you promise, by the grace of God, to be Christ's disciple, to follow in the way of our Savior, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able?

Candidates: I promise, with the help of God.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Pastor: Let all God's people stand to unite in confessing our faith in the Triune God.

Pastor: Do you believe in God?

All: I believe in God.

Pastor: Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

All: I believe in Jesus Christ.

Pastor: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit.

All: I believe in the Holy Spirit. (The congregation may be seated.)

QUESTION ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Pastor: Do you promise to participate in the life and mission of this family of God's people known as Starview United Church of Christ, sharing regularly in the worship of God and enlisting in the work of this congregation as it serves this community and the world.

Candidates: I promise, with the help of God.

Pastor: Let us, the members of Starview United Church of Christ, express our welcome and affirm our mutual ministry in Christ.

Congregation: We welcome you with joy in the common life of this church. We promise you our friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of the church of Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit may we continue to grow together in God's knowledge and love and be witnesses of our risen Savior.

Pastor: In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of Starview United Church of Christ, we extend to you the hand of Christian love and welcome you into the family of this local church.

PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom comes. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERING INVITATION⁶ (Inspired by 1 Kings 17: 8-16)

Liturgist: The widow of Zarephath thought the end was near. In a time of great drought, she had only enough meal and oil to prepare a last bit of flatbread for herself and her son. And yet, when asked, she was willing to share what she had with a stranger. With great courage, she trusted God's promise to provide for her family. Her story invites us to look at the act of sharing as an act of trust. Let us share generously and courageously because we can trust God to provide us with what we need. Let us now offer what we joyfully give, with a prayer:

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

All: Gracious God, we give these gifts because you ask us to share. We dedicate this offering and our lives to your service, that the hungry may be fed, the oppressed may receive justice, the grieving may dance again, and the stranger may be welcomed in our midst. We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

HYMN***How Great Our Joy!***

> 1. While by the sheep we watched at night, Glad tid-ings bro't an an-gel
 > 2. There shall be born, so he did say, In Beth-le-hem a Child to -
 > 3. There shall the Child lie in a stall, This Child who shall re-deem us
 > 4. This Gift of God we'll cher-ish well, That ev-er joy our hearts shall

bright.
 day.
 all.
 fill.

How great our joy! Great our joy! Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!

Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high! Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!

BENEDICTION

Pastor: Fellow sojourners traveling towards the House of Bread...
 Fellow sojourners traveling to meet and greet The Bread of Life,
 Be people of JOY!

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⁶ Posted on the United Church of Christ's **Worship Ways** website. <http://www.ucc.org/worship-ways/>

Congregation: I will be an angel – a messenger of God’s Good News!
I will be an angel, sharing joy by seeing the good in myself and others:
friends & strangers, alike!
I will be an angel, sharing joy by serving as a peacemaker -
participating in acts of justice.
I will be an angel, sharing joy by actively praying for our world –
in my words, thoughts, and actions.

Pastor: Fellow sojourners traveling towards the House of Bread...
Fellow sojourners traveling to meet and greet the Bread of Life,
May we travel joyfully!

All: *Amen and AMEN!*

POSTLUDE

Resounding Joy (Little) ⁷

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