

December 13, 2020
Third Sunday in Advent¹
Hope in Truth Telling

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GREETING²

PRELUDE

Messiah Now has Come³
Penn Central Conference Virtual Choir
I Will Sing a New Song⁴
(Howard Thurman, 1975)

The old song of my spirit has wearied itself out. It has long ago been learned by heart; it repeats itself over and over, bringing no added joy to my days or lift to my spirit. I will sing a new song. I must learn the new song for the new needs. I must fashion new words born of all the new growth of my life— of my mind— of my spirit. I must prepare for new melodies that have never been mine before, that all that is within me may lift my voice unto God. Therefore, I shall rejoice with each new day and delight my spirit in each fresh unfolding. I will sing, this day, a new song unto the Lord.

ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING

Pastor: John the Baptist sang a new song:

***All people: Level mountains. Fill in valleys. Make crooked roads straight.
Prepare the way of the Lord!***

Pastor: The first candle in our advent wreath is lit for the first time Jesus came to earth.

All people: A shining example of how we should live.

Pastor: The second candle is lit for the Second Coming of Christ.

All people: When God will remake, renew, and restore all creation.

Pastor: The third candle in our advent wreath,
like John the Baptist, lights the way.

All people: Help us to make a way for you too, Jesus.

Pastor: The Lord is coming, shout it out!

All people: Arise! The Kingdom is at hand!

Pastor: Salvation comes!

All people: Arise! The Kingdom is at hand!

¹ Hargraves, Sara, and Sam. *Worship in the Waiting*, an Advent worship resource was purchased by Pastor Laura and is shared from her library of material. The Hargraves wrote this material for **engage**worship - a ministry of Music and Worship Foundation CIO. Copyright permission to print and use in-person and online is granted upon purchase.

² The flowers today are from the Celebration of Life Service held on December 11, 2020 for Joyce Schaeffer (1September 5, 1935 – December 7, 2020) and are lovingly given by her husband, Bill Schaeffer and family.

³ Thank you, Gloria & Larry Moyer, for sharing your time and talent by singing in the PCC virtual choir, in this performance of “Messiah Now has Come,” written by Nolan Williams, Jr. as published in the African American Heritage Hymnal, 1996.

⁴ Amid the challenges of his time, philosopher and theologian, Howard Thurman wrote these profound and hopeful words in his book, *The Moods of Christmas*, as he recalled the “Magnificat of Mary” (Luke 1:39-56). Beneath the reading done by Rev. Tony Fields, our very own church member, Gloria Moyer, plays “Somebody Talking about Jesus” on her dulcimer. Thank you!

ADVENT HYMN

*Arise, the Kingdom is at Hand*⁵

Tune: Ellacombe (“I Sing the Mighty Power of God”)

Arise, the kingdom is at hand; the King is drawing nigh.
Arise with joy, thou faithful band, to meet the Lord most high!
Look up, ye souls weighed down with care, the Sovereign is not far.
Look up, ye faint hearts, from despair. Behold, the Morning Star!

John the Wrecking Ball⁶

A poem to introduce John the Baptist

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 11:2-11 (CEB)

²Now when John heard in prison about the things the Christ was doing, he sent word by his disciples to Jesus, asking, ³“Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”

⁴Jesus responded, “Go, report to John what you hear and see. ⁵Those who were blind, are able to see. Those who were crippled are walking. People with skin diseases are cleansed. Those who were deaf now hear. Those who were dead are raised up. The poor have good news proclaimed to them. ⁶Happy are those who don’t stumble and fall because of me.”

⁷When John’s disciples had gone, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John: “What did you go out to the wilderness to see? A stalk blowing in the wind? ⁸What did you go out to see? A man dressed up in refined clothes? Look, those who wear refined clothes are in royal palaces. ⁹What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

¹⁰He is the one of whom it is written: Look, I’m sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you.

SERMON

Hope in Truth-Telling

Rev. Laura C. Bair

SPECIAL MUSIC

*Still, Still, Still*⁷

Dulcimer, Gloria Moyer

TIME OF PRAYER and COMMITMENT (Based on Isaiah 35:1-10)

Pastor: We proclaim that Jesus, you have come,

All people: and you will come again, help us work for the justice of your Kingdom.

Pastor: We look at our world, so desperately in need of you. Ice caps melt, deserts spread, harvests fail and people thirst. But you promise: “The desert and the

⁵ Author: Johann von Rist. Public Domain.

⁶ Thank you, Neil Werner for your passionate and creative portrayal of John the Baptist! We could feel the immediacy of the baptist’s call to repentance; of telling the truth or coming clean about our sin. Thank you, Megan Kochenderfer for your powerful narration of the poem, *John the Wrecking Ball*, which was written by Amy Scott Robinson for engageworship. We were on the edge of our seats!

⁷ The Christmas carol, “Still, Still, Still” by Maria Vinzenz Stuß is a *Wiegenlied* (“cradle song” or lullaby) originated in Austria in the mid-1800s. The melody is a traditional folk tune from the Austrian state of Salzburg. The musical instrument called the dulcimer is an American invention first appearing in the Appalachian region’s Scottish-Irish communities in the early 19th century and brought to national popularity by folk musician Jean Ritchie in the 1950’s. Thank you, Gloria, for blessing us with your musical talent.

parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.” (35:1) We bring to you those who suffer from natural disasters: with droughts and famines, earthquakes, tornados, that you would provide for their needs. We pray for farmers and those who work for environmental justice, who battle for a better stewardship of your creation.

Pastor: We proclaim that Jesus, you have come,
All people: and you will come again, help us work for the justice of your Kingdom.

Pastor: We look at our world, so desperately in need of you. Nations act selfishly, injustices deepen, and people suffer with anxiety and depression, but you promise to: “Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear...’” (35:3-4a) We bring you those who suffer from fear and anxiety, that you would bring healing to their souls, and we pray for those who work to strengthen the fearful.

Pastor: We proclaim that Jesus, you have come,
All people: and you will come again, help us work for the justice of your Kingdom.

Pastor: We look at our world, so desperately in need of you. Viruses run amuck. Diseases cripple. Addiction kills. Illness impedes potential, causing pain and suffering. But you promise, “The eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.” (35:5-6) We bring you those we know personally who are ill at this time, that you will bring healing to their bodies and minds and spirits. We pray for those who work tirelessly to care for those in physical, mental, and spiritual need: nurses, doctors, psychiatrists, social workers, clergy, medical assistants, technologists, and technicians.

Pastor: We proclaim that Jesus, you have come,
All people: and you will come again, help us work for the justice of your Kingdom.

Pastor: Lord Jesus, we see in the gospels how you fulfill Isaiah’s prophecies, and we hunger for those promises to be complete. As we wait for your return, help us be your hands and feet on earth.

All people: We proclaim that Jesus, you have come, and you will come again, help us work for the justice of your Kingdom. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

CHRISTMAS CAROL

*Joy to the World*⁸

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Let earth receive her King.

Let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing.

And heaven and nature sing.

And heaven and nature sing.

BENEDICTION

Pastor: Send us out, Lord...

⁸ Author: Isaac Watts. Public Domain

All people: with hearts prepared to make you room.
Pastor: Send us out, Lord...
All people: to trust you through our disappointments.
Pastor: Send us out, Lord...
*All people: to take joy in the journey,
rather than rush towards a destination.*
Pastor: Send us out, Lord...
All people: to live with the tension of the now and the not yet.
Pastor: Send us out, Lord...
*All people: to be patient and stand firm,
because your coming Kingdom is at hand.
Amen.*

POSTLUDE

Christmas Joy (Benton)