

February 18, 2024  
Persistent Joy - First Sunday in Lent

On the last night of his life, as evening fell, Jesús sat down to dinner with his friends. He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and passed it around the table for everyone to eat, saying,

**All people:** *This is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.*

Pastor: When the meal had ended, the shadows closing in, Jesus took the cup, blessed it, and invited everyone to drink, saying:

**All people:** *This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.*

Pastor: In the heart of fear and pain, God plants the seed of our joy:

**All people:** *Christ has died.*

*Christ is risen.*

*Christ will come again.*

Pastor: Send your Spirit upon this bread and cup, Christ's body and blood, the food that gives us the strength to persist until joy appears. Send your Spirit upon us and fortify us to be your body, too, a wellspring of hope for a world in need. All glory, power, and honor are yours, God of brilliant resurrection and quiet joy, today and every day.

**All people:** *Amen.*

#### SHARING OF THE ELEMENTS

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

**All people:** *God in storms and rainbows, we came to your table hungry, and we leave feeling full— full of hope, full of promise, full of what could be. For we not only, found glimpses of You at this Table, but we caught a glimpse of the way things could be: in a meal and of a community, where all people are welcomed and all are fed. Is there anything holier than that? With grateful hearts we pray. Amen.*

**HYMN** *Rejoice, You Pure in Heart* **Blue Chalice Hymnal, #15**

#### BENEDICTION

Pastor: The Creator who wove joy throughout the whole cosmos weaves joy within your own heart. The Christ who experienced all our human joys and sorrows travels right beside you. The Spirit who whispers joy to our hearts is present within you. You are blessed in the name of God: The Holy Three in One.

**All people:** *We will practice joy that persists in every storm. Amen*

#### POSTLUDE

#### PREWORSHIP MUSIC

#### GREETINGS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRELUDE

**Mr. Kevin Crone**

#### CANDLELIGHTING

Acolyte

*(Please stand in body and/or spirit)*

#### CALL TO WORSHIP –

Pastor: People of God, we gather for worship to practice joy:  
not because our lives are perfect,  
but because joy is resilient.  
Joy is God's gift for every season  
and a wellspring at the heart of our faith.  
When our sins feel heavy,

**Congregation: we practice joy.**

Pastor: When floods rise and fall,

**Congregation: we practice joy.**

Pastor: When hope surprises us,

**Congregation: we practice joy.**

Pastor: When God sets people free,

**Congregation: we practice joy.**

Pastor: When Jesus heals us,

**Congregation: we practice joy.**

Pastor: When we are called

**Congregation: we practice joy.**

Pastor: When we endure,

**Congregation: we practice joy.**

Pastor: We practice joy together,

**All people:** *and God is with us.*

**HYMN** *Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts* **Blue Chalice Hymnal, #101**

#### CALL TO CONFESSION

Pastor: People of God, the Merciful One already knows everything we confess. By naming our sins and hearing words of forgiveness, we are drawn deeper into relationship with God and one another. Let's bring before God what we have done wrong and what we've failed to do, trusting that we will receive the joy of being forgiven...(Moment of silence for personal, private confession to God)

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Pastor: God of abundant goodness,

**All people:** *We have hurt those we love, those far from us, ourselves, and your creation by what we do and by what we neglect. We cling to disappointments, judgments, and failures and refuse to enjoy what you give. We are too content when injustice, violence, and hardship plague our neighbors. We ignore the gift of your presence in times both tragic and triumphant. Forgive us for what we have done and for what we have failed to do. Pour out on us the joy of your presence and heal what we have harmed. Amen.*

## ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Pastor: Friends, receive these joyful words: You are entirely and completely forgiven for all of your sins. You are entirely and completely welcomed as God's beloved child. You are released to live out God's love in a world that needs joy.

**All people:** *Amen.*

## PRAISE HYMN

*I Come, With Joy* (Verse 1, only) **Blue Chalice Hymnal, #420**  
*I come with joy, a child of God, forgiven loved and free.*  
*The life of Jesus to recall, in love laid down for me.*  
*In love laid for me.*

*(The congregation may be seated, as the children & youth come forward)*

## JESUS SAID, "LET THE CHILDREN COME"

## HYMN

*I Come, with Joy* (All verses)

**Blue Chalice Hymnal, #420**

## HEBREW READING

**Genesis 9:8-17**

## GOSPEL READING

**Mark 1:9-15**

## SERMON

**Rev. Laura Baker**

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

**All people:** *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 sins, as we forgive those who sin 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. Amen.*

## ANTHEM

*O Lord, I Cry to Thee* (Arcadelt)

**Chancel Choir**

## OFFERING INVITATION

Liturgist: God has given us all that is good and right and true. What a joy to share these gifts in the life of this community and far beyond our own reach. With a prayer of gratitude and joyful eagerness, let us return to God an offering and a re-commitment of our time, talent, and money.

*(Please stand in body and/or spirit)*

## OFFERING RESPONSE

**Accept, O God, the Gifts**

**Blue Chalice Hymnal, #379**

(Tune: Ellacombe)

*Accept, O God, the gifts we bring of spirit and of clay.*  
*Transform them into blessings on those we serve today.*  
*Rekindle deep within us all passion to fulfill*  
*The ministry disciples have, empowered to do your will.*

*(An Offering Collection Box is located on the table in the back of sanctuary, by the exit door)*

## PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**All people:** *God of mercy and grace, you give us so much: our days, our loved ones, our passions and talents, the food we eat, the homes we know, a place to worship. We thank you for bringing children and youth into our midst along with the opportunity to serve them through Sunday School and JAM. Bless them and bless us through these very special ministries. May our words surrounding these ministries, be a sweet, sweet sound to your ears, O God, and may our time and talent given towards them, be offerings, with which you are well-pleased. Receive the many other gifts we offer back to you today. Bless them and bless us, that we will give generously, love boldly, and share widely, our offering reflecting your joyful gifts through Christ. Amen*

## SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Pastor: God is with you.

**Congregation: And also with you.**

Pastor: Rejoice with full hearts.

**Congregation: We offer them to God.**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to our God.

**Congregation: It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Pastor: God, there is no time, no place where you are not present, and there is no time, no place where we should not practice the joy of praising you: even here, even now, in our ordinary lives. As we give thanks, we join the choir of our ancestors and our heirs and all God's angels as they time their breath to the rhythm of joy and sing of heaven despite the world.

**All sing:**

***Seraphic Hymn***

**Red Hymnal, #522**

Pastor: God, our ancestors knew the long road toward joy. Noah saw your rainbow after a devastating flood. Sarah and Abraham found hope for their future in a covenant promise. Moses cradled your law in his arms and the Israelites found wilderness life where they should have died. The prophets read your faithfulness traced forever on their hearts. Your love sent us Jesus and his persistent, irrational joy: dripping with the Jordan's baptismal flood, teaching in the crowd's beating heart, tossing the tables of empire and profit, falling like a seed into warm dark soil as he offered his life for us all.