



Evening Prayer

Sunday, December 13, 2020

Third Sunday of Advent

THE ADVENT WREATH *(by David Miller Kohlmeier, adapted with permission)*

Each year, many of us observe the tradition of lighting the candles of an Advent Wreath. These candles mark the Sundays of the season of Advent. They remind us Advent is a time for reflection as we prepare our hearts to come close to the mystery of Christmas. In most years we light a new candle each week, and the light grows brighter each Sunday. This year, however, we're doing something a little different; because light is not the only path toward Christmas. Darkness, too, can draw us close. And, perhaps, is the better path to follow in this strange and often troubling year. We begin with all the candles lit, and each week we extinguish another flame, until, gradually, we enter into the full darkness.

The Third Candle

Today, we extinguish the third candle as we reflect on the gift of joy. Darkness offers us the chance to experience joy in ways we can't in the light. The flicker of fireflies on a summer's eve, the haunting call of an owl as it embarks on its nighttime hunt, the twinkling stars on a cold winter's night, or the soft glow of candles set in the windows of our friends and neighbors; each invites us to an experience of joy that can only take place in the dark. In moments when grief and sadness threaten to overwhelm us, we pause and give thanks for the joyful wonders of darkness. May we be blessed by the gift of joy.

OPENING SENTENCE

Officiant: Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height and look toward the east, and see your children gathered from west and east at the word of the Holy One. (Baruch 5:5)

CONFESSION OF SIN

Officiant: Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

People: Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

Officiant: Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

THE INVITATORY

Officiant: O God, make speed to save us.

People: O Lord, make haste to help us.

All: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen!

O GRACIOUS LIGHT *(Phos hilaron)*

All: O gracious light, pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven, O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed! Now as we come to the setting of the sun, and our eyes behold the vesper light, we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices, O Son of God, O Giver of Life, and to be glorified through all the worlds.

PSALM 126

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
then were we like those who dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy.

Then they said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”

The Lord has done great things for us,
and we are glad indeed.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses of the Negev.

Those who sowed with tears
will reap with songs of joy.

Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

**All: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be forever. Amen!**

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF ISAIAH (61:1-4, 8-11)

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations..

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

A SONG OF MARY

Luke 1:46-55

All: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he has remembered his promise of mercy, The promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever.

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be for ever. Amen.**

A READING FROM PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS (5:16-24)

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May 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. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

A SONG OF JERUSALEM OUR MOTHER

Isaiah 66:10-14

All: Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her all you who love her, Rejoice, rejoice with her, all you who mourn over her, That you may drink deeply with delight from her comforting breast. For thus says our God, "I will extend peace to her like a river, the wealth of nations like an overflowing stream. "You shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and you shall nestle in her lap. "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. "You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice, you shall flourish like the grass of the fields."

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN (1:6-8,19-28)

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 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.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

THE APOSTLES' CREED

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I 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.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

THE PRAYERS

Officiant: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Officiant: Let us pray.

All: 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, for ever and ever. Amen.

Officiant: That this evening may be holy, good, and peaceful,

People: We entreat you, O Lord.

Officiant: That your holy angels may lead us in paths of peace and goodwill,

People: We entreat you, O Lord.

Officiant: That we may be pardoned and forgiven for our sins and offenses,

People: We entreat you, O Lord.

Officiant: That there may be peace to your Church and to the whole world,

People: We entreat you, O Lord.

Officiant: That we may depart this life in your faith and fear, and not be condemned before the great judgment seat of Christ,

People: We entreat you, O Lord.

Officiant: That we may be bound together by your Holy Spirit in the communion of all your saints, entrusting one another and all our life to Christ,

People: We entreat you, O Lord.

THE COLLECTS

The Collect of the Day

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

A Collect for Sundays

Lord God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ triumphed over the powers of death and prepared for us our place in the new Jerusalem: Grant that we, who have this day given thanks for his resurrection, may praise you in that City of which he is the light, and where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

A Collect for the Presence of Christ

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. Amen.

A Collect for Mission

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING

All: Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love

in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

A PRAYER OF ST. CHRYSOSTOM

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. **Amen.**

THE DISMISSAL

Officiant: Let us bless the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen. (*Ephesians 3:20, 21*)

*This phrase was adapted from *The West Wing*, Season 2, Episode 7 “The Portland Trip”