



The Holy Eucharist

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Christmas Eve

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've done 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 began with all the candles lit, and each week we have extinguished another flame. We have reflected on the gifts unique to darkness. On the gift of rest, which happens best in darkness. On the gift of dreams, which darkness gives space for. We reflected on the gift of joy, in particular those joys that can only be experienced in darkness, ; the twinkling of stars or flickering candlelight. And on the gift of mysteries born in darkness. Gradually, we have entered into full darkness.

And, perhaps, in this strange and troubling year, this darkness has offered us a new way to experience both the dark and the light. So tonight, as darkness encircles us, we light the Christ Candle. In the midst of darkness, we pause, reflect, and give thanks for the Light which has come into the world.

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

Celebrant: The Lord be with you

People: And also with you.

Celebrant: Let us pray

O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF ISAIAH (9:2-7)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness--on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 96

Sing to the Lord a new song;

 sing to the Lord, all the whole earth.

Sing to the Lord and bless his Name;

 proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day.

Declare his glory among the nations

 and his wonders among all peoples.

For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised;
 he is more to be feared than all gods.
 As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols;
 but it is the Lord who made the heavens.
 Oh, the majesty and magnificence of his presence!
 Oh, the power and the splendor of his sanctuary!
 Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples;
 ascribe to the Lord honor and power.
 Ascribe to the Lord the honor due his Name;
 bring offerings and come into his courts.
 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
 let the whole earth tremble before him.
 Tell it out among the nations: "The Lord is King!
 he has made the world so firm that it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."
 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it;
 let the field be joyful and all that is therein.
 Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy before the Lord when he comes,
 when he comes to judge the earth.
 He will judge the world with righteousness
 and the peoples with his truth..

A READING FROM TITUS (2:11-14)

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE GOSPEL READING (LUKE 2:1-20)

Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with

haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”

Celebrant: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.

THE SERMON

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE *(from the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, Cincinnati, Ohio)*

Intercessor: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, you dwell with us in the darkness and the light of our lives. Give us grace to call out to you with devotion and praise as we pray for the Church and for the World, saying, Emmanuel,

People: Hear our prayer.

Intercessor: May the radiance of the star that shone brightly over Bethlehem illumine our nation, filling it with light and peace. Emmanuel,

People: Hear our prayer.

Intercessor: May people in all the world find refuge and love in times of danger and fear, and may the Church be awakened to the human needs of our present time. Emmanuel,

People: Hear our prayer.

Intercessor: As the Magi came bearing gifts, may we, this Christmas, gift our local community with the gold of charity, the myrrh of kindness, and the incense of prayer. Emmanuel,

People: Hear our prayer.

Intercessor: We pray for those in our parish family who are sick or distressed and for all those affected by the Coronavirus. We pray for all who suffer, especially: the homeless, the hungry, and those in prison. To these our siblings, may our hearts be a manger of welcome, and our hands a cradle of Joy. Emmanuel,

People: Hear our prayer.

Intercessor: May the blessed hope of everlasting life, be the Truth of those whom we have known and loved, but see no longer. Emmanuel,

People: Hear our prayer.

Celebrant: We adore you, Ever-present God, and we bless you, because by the holy birth of Christ you give hope to all the world. May our prayers become living words, inspired by the Word who lives in us always, your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

CONFESSION OF SIN *(from Disrupt Worship Project)*

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

People: God in flesh, You chose to come down to be among us, to be with us, to be one of us. You chose to become flesh and blood, to be born of a woman, to bleed and cry and bleed and rage. You did this that we might see more clearly how we are called to live and who we are called to be. You did this that we might know forgiveness, grace, and hope in your death and resurrection. We have sinned. Each and every day we forget your call to love one another as we are loved. We forget to see your face in the poor, the hungry and imprisoned, in immigrants, refugees, and those who are different from us. We forget to see your face in our friends and our enemies; to honor our flesh and their flesh in its holiness. Forgive us. Forgive us in our ignorance, forgive us in our anger, in our stress, in our hate and in our fear. Help us remember how to hope. Help us remember your promise of new life and your call to us to live into the kingdom here and now. Lead us in your way that we might help others to see you. Help us to walk in the hope of the promise born this night.

Officiant: This night we celebrate the great joy of a child born to a woman in Bethlehem. A child born in a war-torn land, a child who would be a refugee, who would grow into a man who would be executed by the state. A man who would teach us to love one another, and who would give his life that we may live; that we might be forgiven.

And so I declare to you, in the name of our enfleshed God, the forgiveness of all of your sins. Go, therefore, and live, whole and holy. **Amen.**

THE PEACE

Celebrant: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: And also with you.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING (*Eucharistic Prayer adapted from Disrupt Worship Project and EOW Form A*)

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

People We lift them to the Lord.

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Oh Creator, from the beginning of time you have been with us. You save us again and again, from ourselves. From our hatred of others. From our judgements that we know more than you. You created us as whole beings, minds, bodies, souls, all together, all connected. You bring us prophets to point the way, to call us in, to call us toward love and life. And yet, we turn away. It is too hard to see. In the creative darkness, in the beginning of time, the depth of Mary's womb, you knit together a real human body that comes from another body. A connected body. You were a baby. We hear your cries to eat, to sleep, to be held, to be changed. In the incarnation, in becoming human, you know what it is to bleed. To hurt. To cry out for justice from a body that was tortured. You know the pain of speaking up against the things that separate. The pain of oppression. Of those who think they get to define who counts as human. And yet, you gave yourself to us. You gave your own body and blood to heal us, to bring us closer to ourselves, and one another. To heal the broken connections, within, without, and between our whole beings. In this meal, you connect your body to ours.

And so, we offer you these gifts. Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of Christ.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

And so, remembering all that was done for us: the birth, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection and ascension, longing for Christ's coming in glory, and presenting to you these gifts your earth has formed and human hands have made, we acclaim you, O Christ:

All: Dying, you destroyed our death. Rising, you restored our life. Christ Jesus, come in glory!

We now celebrate, O God, the memorial of Christ our Savior. By means of this holy bread and cup, we show forth the sacrifice of Christ's death, and proclaim the resurrection, until Christ comes in glory. Gather us by this Holy Communion into one body in the Risen One, and make us a living sacrifice of praise. Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, for ever and ever. **AMEN.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

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.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread. A period of silence is kept.

Celebrant: We break this bread to share in the Body of Christ;

People: We who are many are one body, for we all share in the one bread.

INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL COMMUNION *(Prayer written by the Rev. Bennett Brockman)*

A spiritual communion is a personal devotional that anyone can pray at any time to express their desire to receive Holy Communion at that moment, but in which circumstances impede them from actually receiving the bread and/or wine.

All: God of love and grace, of justice and peace, we give you thanks that in the Sacrament of the altar you assure us of your presence within us and within the body of Christ, the faithful through all the generations; grant that we who have witnessed anew these holy mysteries, though unable to receive the physical elements of the Sacrament, may be moved by your indwelling Spirit ever more fully to embody your holy and life-giving presence, reshaping in your likeness the world around us, until we are gathered at last into the fullness of your glorious and eternal presence; through Christ our Risen Lord, Amen.

POSTCOMMUNION PRAYER

All: Loving God, we give you thanks for restoring us in your image and nourishing us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. Now send us forth a people, forgiven, healed, renewed; that we may proclaim your love to the world and continue in the risen life of Christ our Savior. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN *Silent Night, Holy Night (featuring the Music Ministry of St. John's, Guilford)*

THE BLESSING *(from Disrupt Worship Project)*

Listen to the angels: fear not, this is good news! Go like the shepherds to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us. Be like Mary, Treasure these words you have heard, ponder them in your heart. And may the peace of baby Jesus give you good courage to go into the world, glorifying and praising God for all that you have seen and been told.

THE DISMISSAL

Officiant: Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia

People: Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!