

Worship Resources

2nd Sunday after Christmas, Year B,

3rd January, 2021

Sirach 24:1-12 NRSV / John 1:10-18 CEV

Prelude

As with gladness men of old,

written by Conrad Kocher and William Chatterton Dix

played by church musician Annie Center,

https://youtu.be/js_m2a1Wzmo

Intro / Call to Worship

Arise, shine, for your light has come, The glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
Thick darkness covers the earth and the people, But the Lord will arise upon
you, God's glory appear over you. You shall see and be radiant;
Your heart shall thrill and rejoice. The light of the world has come, and is with
us; Shine your light, and proclaim the praise of the Lord!

**I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church.
We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the
radically transforming power of God's love.**

**As we gather today for the first time since Christmas, let's take a moment to
enjoy this joyous hymn celebrating the arrival of Christ's light in the world.**

Reflection video ***Joy to the World***

arranged by Mack Wilberg.

Performed by Portland Choir and Orchestra at the Newmark Theatre in
Downtown Portland, Oregon in December 2015.

Featuring members of Fired-Up Dance Academy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HtyDqc15-A>

Invocation

As we journey through the season of Christmas to Epiphany, we are still the
people walking. We are still people in the dark, and the darkness looms large
around us, beset as we are by fear, anxiety, brutality, violence, loss — a dozen
alienations that we cannot manage.

We are — we could be — people of your light. So we pray for the light of your

glorious presence as we wait for your appearing; we pray for the light of your wondrous grace as we exhaust our coping capacity; we pray for your gift of newness that will override our weariness; we pray that we may see and know and hear and trust in your good rule.

That we may have energy, courage, and freedom to enact your rule through the demands of this day. We submit our day to you and to your rule, with deep joy and high hope, Amen..

We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (light candle) Amen.

In our reading from the apocryphal text Sirach today, we hear of God being portrayed as wisdom... As we listen to these words, let's think about where we seek wisdom in our lives, and how we let that wisdom guide our actions each day.

Reading from the Apocrypha Sirach 24:1-12 NRSV

Wisdom praises herself, and tells of her glory in the midst of her people.

In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth, and in the presence of his hosts she tells of her glory:

“I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist. I dwelt in the highest heavens, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud.

Alone I compassed the vault of heaven and traversed the depths of the abyss.

Over waves of the sea, over all the earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway.^[b]

Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose territory should I abide?

“Then the Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator chose the place for my tent. He said, ‘Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your Inheritance.’

Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be.

In the holy tent I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion.

Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my Domain. I took root in an honored people, in the portion of the Lord, his heritage.

A Time of Prayer

Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: vicarglenn@gmail.com, and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.

Joys and Concerns

This morning we remember those who struggle with illness, with loneliness and grief, and the isolation of these times. May they receive comfort and strength,

We bring the divisiveness and anger that is so prevalent to our God. May God work in the hearts of all to lead us to compassion and understanding and true shalom.

Those who struggle with food and shelter insufficiency are always in our minds. May we find ways to be God's hands and feet to give comfort and help to those in need.

Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

Light-Giving-God

We are magi on a caravan of lumbering hope, traveling through grinding wind and glaring sun, chill clear nights and skin-baking days. We come to seek Your light.

We come lumbering in hope, each of us on our own life's journey – traveling through times of loneliness and fear, through heartbreak and anger, through grief and loss, through economic uncertainty, through fear for loved ones caught up in war, through our own private crises, through the extended shock of horrific images of hurricanes and genocide, through struggles with the mental illness of a child, the disintegration of a parent, the simple letting go of a child more ready to be an adult than we are ready to allow their growth, through the changes in a new marriage, the welcoming of a new child, the completion of a degree, the vision emerging in a new work of art. We come lumbering in hope on a journey of joys and sorrows. We come as magi to seek Your light.

But Light-giving God, we admit that we are also Herod the King, trembling in fear at the news of the rising of Your light.

We admit that we are afraid that the light of Your truth may indeed rise, and it may be threatening to us.

Like Herod, we fear the rise of the truth of the harm we have done to others to build our own palaces and to fortify our own power; we fear the rise of the truth that lies beneath the political spin we put on our own lives; we fear to admit to ourselves the truth that may rise within us as we acknowledge the pain of what we have done to others and what others have done to us.

Light-giving God, we come as trembling Herod, afraid of Your light.

But Light-giving God, we are also magi wrapped in joy to arrive at the manger that cradles Your light. We greet the rising light that Herod so fears. We, too, fear this light, this truth. For here we meet Your light and truth, the truth of our own powerlessness.

We are magi, wise and respected sages. We are Herod the King, holding wealth and power. Yet we are no more than this helpless infant, no more than human flotsam on the tidal wave of time, human beings, no more and no less.

Light-giving God, let us sit in stillness in the light of this truth of our powerlessness, until we can see Your real light cradled here, until we are enveloped in the assuring light of this truth, until we shine in the light of the common humanity You reveal to us here.

Light-giving God. We lumber together in hope as Your church to lift Your Light. Let the light that we lift be this light visible in the manger. Let us lift not the light of our congratulation of ourselves, not the light of belief in our own superiority, not the light of our belief in our own narrow presuppositions, not even the light of our own church.

Let us lift the light from You that we can encounter here, the light of the power You make known to us in the truth of our powerlessness, the light we can see as we sit quietly as magi at the manger learning to be at ease with our common humanity, learning to be at ease with You.

Let this be the light we lift as a beacon in the darkness we know best. As we lift that light, may we too be lifted to know the true power that lies among us waiting to rise as a beacon of our true hope. Amen.

In our gospel lesson this morning, we hear how we are children of God, of the Word, of wisdom. As we listen to these words from John, let give some serious thought as to what wisdom we truly rely on, that from on high, or do we seek wisdom elsewhere?

Gospel Lesson

John 1:10-18 CEV

The Word was in the world, but no one knew him, though God had made the world with his Word.

He came into his own world, but his own nation did not welcome him.

Yet some people accepted him and put their faith in him. So he gave them the right to be the children of God.

They were not God's children by nature or because of any human desires. God himself was the one who made them his children.

The Word became a human being and lived here with us. We saw his true Glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. From him all the kindness and all the truth of God have come down to us.

John spoke about him and shouted, "This is the one I told you would come! He is greater than I am, because he was alive before I was born."

Because of all that the Son is, we have been given one blessing after another.[\[a\]](#)

The Law was given by Moses, but Jesus Christ brought us undeserved kindness and truth. 18 No one has ever seen God.

The only Son, who is truly God and is closest to the Father, has shown us what God is like.

Scripture Video John 1:10-18 The Word Became Human

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pqB6RmvyZY>

Message – Seeking Wisdom

We hear a lot this time of the year about light and word. The “light of the world,” the “light that the darkness cannot overcome,” “in the beginning was the Word,” the “Word was made flesh,” to name just a few. Themes and metaphors of “light” are infused and completely intertwined with the preparation of Advent, culminating in the candlelight service that transitions us to Christmas each year. Often we have different themes and programming for Advent and Christmas each year, but we never really lose that symbolism and metaphor of light and darkness, of Word becoming flesh. On the surface, it doesn’t seem so complicated. The Christmas story represents Jesus’ arrival in this world bringing hope and promise, good news to those who had none. There’s a sense that he brought something that was missing, a connection to the Divine, that would, in the course of time, bring about a resolution to the problems of those who suffered here and now. Certainly that is the whole meaning of gospel, or “good news,” and the “incarnation,” which is God appearing in human form. Those are familiar terms and concepts for many of us. However there is much more to these concepts of light and word if we look a little deeper into our lessons this morning.

In the very beginning of the creation story in Genesis, we have darkness being broken by light. God came into the darkness and created light to break up and overcome it. God created light in the heavens to counter the darkness, whether the sun by day or the stars and moon by night. There is a sense of God’s created order making sense of the negative chaos of darkness, or the absence of God’s light. But what exactly is the “light?” When we hear “light,” most of us probably think in terms of illumination, like the sun or the moon, or our own invention, light bulbs. Those elements certainly drive away physical darkness and shadow. But from a scriptural perspective, starting in Genesis, there’s a sense of light bringing order to disorder and chaos. God brings light and order to creation. All is ordered according to the divine plan and the result is Eden, perfection.

Our texts this morning introduce a different dimension to God, a different face. Our perception of God is often that of a fatherly figure, usually with white hair and a long flowing beard. Yet in Sirach, we are introduced to the Wisdom of God, a female persona. Like our initial image of God in Genesis, Wisdom, or Sophia in Greek, is portrayed as a mist covering the Earth, penetrating into every corner, then a pillar of cloud, mirroring the imagery from the Exodus story. Yet Wisdom is desperate for a home, for a people in which to pitch her tent. God gives her Israel as a home.

Jewish tradition and scholarship considers the Torah to be the embodiment of the Wisdom persona of God. God's covenant with the people in Sinai was meant to bring them back into sync with the created order. However, the drawback to God creating people in the divine image is they also have free will. They want to make things according to their design, and they soon strayed, following their own interests, as they did in Eden. Soon the law was viewed as a burden, and the Wisdom it contained was no longer recognized and acknowledged.

Likewise, in John, we have another image of the embodiment of this Wisdom persona in the Word. But to understand what that really means, we need to take a closer look at what "word" means in this context. For many, when they hear "Word" in this prologue to John, they think of the written scripture. And while the Bible certainly gives insight into "the Word," that is not what is being referred to. In Greek, the scriptures are *biblos*. However, in John, what is translated as "word" is the Greek word *logos*. Literally translated as "reason or plan," *logos* is the divine reason in creation, ordering it and giving it form and meaning. In other words, *logos* is the reason, or wisdom of God. If we work with this definition, this first chapter of John makes a lot more sense. It would only be natural for "the Word" to be with God from the beginning, and through "the Word," all that is was created. And similar to our story of Wisdom from Sirach, the Word also was ultimately accepted by most of his people.

Throughout scripture, there are those few who recognized the importance of the wisdom in their midst, but those prophets often also faced the same scorn. John the Baptist is the example given in John. However with the Word, not only truth and wisdom was embodied, but also grace. When the people cast off and crucified the Word, he sent yet another embodiment of Wisdom to the people, in the form of the Spirit. This act of grace made wisdom available to the individual and the body of believers without restriction or reliance on physical manifestation. The last link in an unbroken chain of wisdom and truth since the very beginning. The question is, do or will we avail ourselves of this wisdom so readily available to us?

We always seem to rely on ourselves for all the answers. Yet where has that gotten us? Are we any closer to being in sync with God's created order, in any more in tune with God's wisdom and providence? Or are we still stuck on our own chaotic path? We have a choice. We can keep marching to our own drummer and keep finding ourselves coming up short, or we can actually start paying attention to that still small voice, the Spirit that so desperately wants to be among us, to set up her tent within us. And not just as individuals, but as a community of faith.

For too long, churches have mimicked the same structure and concerns of the world around them, catering to our own flawed logic of revenue and attendance, building maintenance and keeping up appearances, that the Spirit, the wisdom has been relegated to the background, or lost altogether. The past several years have been a sober reminder of the ineffectiveness of that logic. We can have a beautiful building and grounds, hip modern furnishings, and incorporate technology and media into our weekly worship, yet we still find ourselves waning more with

each passing season. This past year has brought that sharply into focus. How do we define ourselves and our mission when all the comfortable trappings are gone? When the church no longer is much different than the world around them, what purpose do they have, why bother spending our time there when there are other more engaging things to do on a Sunday morning? How often do we rely on ourselves, and our human limitations, and miss opportunities because they don't make sense to us, because they go against what we consider to be normal or rational? After all, this is the formula we've been following for decades, that has brought us success in the past. It's what makes sound business and marketing sense, right? But where is the Spirit-led wisdom in that choice?

This morning, let's reflect on how we as individuals, and as a faith community, can seek to be more Spirit-led, and less reliant on our own reason and intellect. What practices might we use to be more in tune with the Divine wisdom we are graced with? How can we incorporate prayer and meditation more into our decisions, as individuals and as a community of faith, and follow the path that leads to, which may be radically different from what we think makes sense from the wisdom the world follows. May we seek out Wisdom and Word in every aspect of our lives, and work together to bring each other back to the perfection of God's order, to be the light and beacon in the chaos of the world around us. Amen.

Call to Serve.

As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. This morning, as Annie shares the following song, let's give some thought as to how we can work together to seek the wisdom that is God and is also in us, and how we can share that wisdom and the gospel that grows from it with those around us.

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [video] *Brightest and Best,*

written by James Proctor Harding

played by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/9mT60QzIyaQ>

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

With these gifts, dear God, accept the praise and thanksgiving of our hearts, which rejoice in your goodness and love. Let our gifts point to your presence in the world, and further your dream for the world through Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

Believe: for light is now in the world. Believe: for God as Sophia has become one of us

Believe: for Love is born in each of us. Believe: for the manger is full

Go and believe it is as the prophets said and the blessing of Christmas of family of friends and of God be with you today Amen

As we extinguish this candle, carry its divine spark into your lives this week, sharing God's love and light with all you encounter. Amen.

Postlude

We Three Kings of Orient Are,

music by John H. Hopkins, Jr.,

performed by church musician Annie Center,

<https://youtu.be/qaHvi-U7nP4>