

Worship Resources / Hope / <https://youtu.be/6yil0fUxxvE>

1st Sunday of Advent, Year B,

29th November, 2020

Isaiah 64:1-9 CEV / Mark 13:24-37 CEV

Prelude *Immanuel (from the squalor of a borrowed stable)*

words and music by Stuart Townend, arr. by Carol Tomquist,

played by church musician Annie Center,

used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246

<https://youtu.be/u5URuySh8sl>

Intro / Call to Worship

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.

This week we begin our Advent journey together, that time of expectation and waiting for the arrival of the promise offered in the holy child of Christmas. As we still are living into a different reality as we enter this season, we will be observing this season from our own spaces instead of gathered together. But we can still find ways to share and participate in the wonder and anticipation of Advent. Each week we will light the Advent candles participating remotely, yet sharing together in this beloved ritual.

Advent Lighting Liturgy Video

Reader 1: In a world of war, famine and pandemic, where children grow up as orphans, where families go hungry and entire regions face destruction by illness, God we call upon you to come.

Reader 2: In a world where so many have lost hope, we call upon you, Lord of Hope, to come.

Reader 1: In this season of Advent, we wait for the coming of Hope into our world. We await the birth of the Christ-child, the coming of God into our lives in a new way.

Reader 2: Come, Messiah, Come, and Save Us.

Advent candle video with prayer

Prayer: Dear God, we pray for the hope that is in Christ to come into our lives in a new way. We await the birth of the Christ-child, the coming of God into our lives in a new way. Amen.

Music video "*O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide*"

Lutheran Service Book LSB #355

Lutheran Warbler

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rM35dhkklh0&list=RDrM35dhkklh0&start_radio=1

In our reading from Isaiah this week, we hear of the promise of God's redemptive power, and our part in that redemption as God's molding clay. As we listen to these words, let's think how we have been, or are being molded, for God's work in today's world.

First Testament Reading Isaiah 64:1-9 CEV

Rip the heavens apart! Come down, Lord; make the mountains tremble.

Be a spark that starts a fire causing water to boil. Then your enemies will know who you are; all nations will tremble because you are nearby.

Your fearsome deeds have completely amazed us; even the mountains shake when you come down.

You are the only God ever seen or heard of who works miracles for his followers.

You help all who gladly obey and do what you want, but sin makes you angry.

Only by your help can we ever be saved.

We are unfit to worship you; each of our good deeds is merely a filthy rag.

We dry up like leaves; our sins are storm winds sweeping us away.

No one worships in your name or remains faithful. You have turned your back on us and let our sins melt us away.

You, Lord, are our Father. We are nothing but clay, but you are the potter who molded us.

Don't be so furious or keep our sins in your thoughts forever! Remember that all of us are your people

Scripture Video

Isaiah 64:1-9 |

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTG7Z8tHomU>

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

We lift up our sister Tammy Worden as she travels to Utah to begin a new chapter in her life. We pray for safe travels and success in her new endeavor.

We also keep Matthew Schultz in our prayers as he begins his fight with colon cancer that has spread to his lungs, liver, and spleen.

Let us also remember Goldie Barnes and her extended family with the passing of her sister Shirley this week from lung cancer.

We can also take joy in being able to provide Thanksgiving meals for 69 families this week, serving 300 people.

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

Pastoral Prayer

Into our troubles and weaknesses, Into the barren places of our souls, Come Lord,
Into the war torn and the refugee, Into those who live in conflict, Come Lord,
Into the homeless and the unemployed, Into those who feel abandoned, Come Lord,
Into the sick and the disabled, Into those with Coronavirus and with cancer, Come,
Lord.

Into the poor and the starving, Into those who are oppressed or abused, Come Lord
Into the lives of loved ones, Into those from whom we are estranged, Come Lord,
Into our joys and celebrations, Into our work and our achievements, Come, Lord

Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.

O Christ we long for your coming. Hasten that day when those who seek you in every nation will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south and sit at a table in Your Kin-dom. Hasten the day when your Kin-dom will come in all its glory and suffering and pain and sickness and oppression and death will be overcome forever. Hasten the day when we will be resurrected as a great multicultural family and live in peace, harmony, joy and love together in your kin-dom. Amen.

In our gospel lesson this morning, Jesus presents an apocalyptic version of things to come. As we listen to these words from Mark, let's think about what hope we find in the redemption to come, and how we share that hope with others.

Gospel Lesson Mark 13:24-37 CEV

In those days, right after that time of suffering, "The sun will become dark, and the moon will no longer shine.

The stars will fall, and the powers in the sky will be shaken."

Then the Son of Man will be seen coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

He will send his angels to gather his chosen ones from all over the earth.

Learn a lesson from a fig tree. When its branches sprout and start putting out leaves, you know summer is near.

So when you see all these things happening, you will know that the time has almost come.

You can be sure that some of the people of this generation will still be alive when all this happens.

The sky and the earth will not last forever, but my words will.

No one knows the day or the time. The angels in heaven don't know, and the Son himself doesn't know. Only the Father knows.

So watch out and be ready! You don't know when the time will come.

It is like what happens when a man goes away for a while and places his servants in charge of everything. He tells each of them what to do, and he orders the guard to keep alert.

So be alert! You don't know when the master of the house will come back. It could be in the evening or at midnight or before dawn or in the morning.

But if he comes suddenly, don't let him find you asleep.

I tell everyone just what I have told you. Be alert!

Scripture Video **Mark 13:24-37 |**
No One Knows The Day Or Time

Lectionary bible reading

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

Message - Hope

So now we are entering into the season of Advent again. That time every year when we talk a lot about “waiting,” “anticipating,” and “keeping awake and ready.” It's that time every year when pastors around the world struggle yet again to try to make this season unique from the more popular Christmas season that follows. But this year, more than others, I think we have a better understanding of what it means to “wait and anticipate.” After all, that's largely what 2020 has meant for us.

We've been waiting for the COVID19 numbers to get better, for the restrictions to be eased, for a vaccine, for the results of the election. We've been waiting for a return to “normal” from many perspectives. With all the drama and stress that this year has brought, we may think it redundant to be told to “keep awake and vigilant.” Most of us are already operating in a state of sleep deprivation and over-caffeination.

In a “normal” year, our list of tasks would be growing to a fever pitch, both in the church and secular world, as we prepare and host or attend holiday gatherings, shop for Christmas presents, decorate our homes and the church. While family gatherings may be smaller or virtual, and our church is still online, we often seem as a culture to be programmed to only work in high gear, to only be able to function at maximum capacity. From that perspective, it seems ludicrous to tell us to “stay awake.” That's what we have become masters of in an overstimulated, social media driven world, that still promotes the excitement of Black Friday consumerism. But let's be clear, while the world's busyness may seem to be pointed to Christmas, even during a pandemic, it is seldom pointed toward the coming of the Christ child. As Advent progresses, the number of shopping days left before the big day offers a countdown that stresses us out and keeps us up late. These days we are startled into extra hours of wakefulness in a liturgical season that annoyingly presumes we might be asleep.

No wonder we often tune it out, like teenagers hearing a parent's repetitive lecture and knowing that mom simply does not understand. But, of course, God does understand.

In this way, the Scripture from long ago reads us, not the other way around. In Advent, we are indeed asleep to much of what matters. Like people who have lived by the train tracks for years, we no longer hear the sound of the train. For many of us, after years in church, we get used to the noise of Advent, to the coming of Christ, so much so that we no longer notice it. Or if we do, it no longer jolts us awake and has become instead a low, dull rumble. New members who have been away from sacramental life return to the season of Advent with delight and wonder as the purple vestments and Advent wreath appear, but after a few years, these signs of the season become mere decoration.

Yet this year is a little different, isn't it. What were the routine and rote traditions and rituals that often faded into the background are suddenly absent. We now feel a sense of loss at what was, and wonder if we will ever be able to recover the "normal" that seems so distant. In a time meant to promote hopefulness, we often find ourselves feeling hopeless. In a way, our current crisis has refocused our attention back to the true meaning and purpose of Advent.

This morning's scriptures are a testament to the promise that this season holds. Both readings were written for people who were going through particularly tough times. In Isaiah, the readers were those Jews who had been exiled to Babylon. They had lost everything, their homes, their Temple, even their God, it seemed. Yet they hold on to the promise that God will forgive and redeem them; that they are clay yet to be molded to God's purpose. In our gospel lesson from Mark, the audience would have recently witnessed the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the second Temple, and most would be living in the exile of the Diaspora, permanently separated from all that had defined their lives and faith. Drawing from the apocalyptic imagery of Daniel, Jesus gives a dramatic image of end times and judgement, and all too often we get caught up in those signs as a road map for the end of things, and try to seek hope in seeing ourselves as the last generation before Christ's return. To read these texts as timelines of the future is to miss the point. It's not the specific details that matter, but the overall promise of God's providence. Bad things will happen in our lives, we will struggle, sometimes seemingly without the promise of redemption. But these stories always end with God's resolution. The faithful are redeemed; things are made right in the end. That is the hope to focus on.

This year, much like the ancient Judeans, we too seem to have lost our way of life. Our “temple” is no longer available to us as it used to be. We have that same sense of loss and hopelessness of being exiled from much that is “normal.” But in these stories, we can find comfort that we are not alone, that others have gone through similar circumstances and come through the other side. When we read the stories of suffering and tribulation in the Bible, too often we focus on what we consider the senseless suffering, and lose the promise of the redemption that follows. We miss the hope part. And even more tragic, we also miss the role we play in bringing about that hope. That is why I like this passage from Isaiah so much. We are God’s clay. We are to be molded to be vessels that carry the faith and the hope of that faith. The promise that we are not forsaken, that God is at work, through us, to bring hope.

The question is, will we allow ourselves to be transformed into something we may not anticipate. We can wallow in the loss of what was, or step into the promise of what can be. Times like these are watershed moments. Will we seek God at work in new ways and join that work, or will we just give up in wistful resignation? Will we find ways to spread hope, or succumb to the hopeless so prevalent all around us. I hope and pray that together we allow ourselves to be molded into the body of Christ, the beacon of hope, our Creator calls us to in this time and place, a shape that may be much different from the old “normal” we pine for. May our journey be another chronicle of redemption and hope in the story of faith. Amen.

Call to Serve.

As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, seeking to give comfort to those in need, 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 God is calling us to be molded into something different, how we might be beacons of hope in the radically different reality we find ourselves in today.

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [video] *Light one candle to watch for*
Yiddish folk tune,
arr. by Wayne L. World,
played by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/AqKV5UB-xY4>

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of hope and wonder,
even surrounded by confusion and trouble
we look for you.
Take these gifts and use
them for acts of justice, peace, mercy, and hope.
Receive also the gifts of our time and our
actions that are just as precious to you as silver and gold. Amen.
(for credits only) ~ posted on Worship Ways, ucc.org

Blessing/Assurance

As we journey together into the week ahead,
take with you God's promise to be with us,
the peace of the Holy Spirit,
and the watchful perseverance of Jesus Christ.
As God came into the world to know us,
now go out into unknown places
with the same compassion that has been given to us. **Amen.**

Postlude *Breath of Heaven (Mary's Song)*
words and music by Amy Grant and Chris Eaton,
arr. by Carol Tornquist,
performed by church musician Annie Center,
used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246

<https://youtu.be/sAOx0ttBRKo>