

## Worship Resources - *Approaching Change*

### Advent 1, Year C,

28<sup>th</sup> November, 2021

**Jeremiah 33:14-16 NRSV / Luke 21:25-36 NRSV**

#### Prelude [\*We Gather Together\*](#)

Netherland Folk Song, arr. by Sharon Wilson, played by Annie Center

### Welcome/Announcements

#### Pass the Peace [\*Now Thank We All Our God\*](#)

Music by Johann Crüger, arrangement by Sharon Wilson, played by Annie Center

### Call to Worship

One: In Advent we watch and wait, and prepare for the change the Christ Child brings to the world.

**All: Come, Lord Jesus, come!**

One: In Advent we prepare for the changes a life of discipleship brings, and watch faithfully for signs of God's changing light breaking into the world.

**All: Come, Lord Jesus, come!**

One: As we wait, dear One, we watch for signs of your action in the world, Actions of compassion and grace breaking in.

**All: Come, Lord Jesus, come!**

One: Holy God, we recognize that we do not know the day or the hour, but we know that the day is near.

**All: Come, Lord Jesus, come! Be born anew in our world and in our lives.**

### Invocation

In this season as the days grow shorter and the shadows lengthen, we gather in eager expectation for the Light of the World to dawn. Help us, God, to lay aside all the works of night and even our cynicism as we enter this sacred season. During this hour of worship, send your Spirit to empower us to live in the light with hope. Amen.

#### Opening Music [\*Oh, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing\*](#) (Lyric Video)

Congregational singing by Grace Community Church Sun Valley, California,

Text: Charles Wesley Tune: AZMON posted to YouTube by de Groot Martjin

## Prophetic Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16 NRSV

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

### Hymn [\*Bless'd be the God of Israel\*](#) (Lyric Video)

Performed and posted to YouTube by Choir of Trinity Church, Swarthmore PA, James Smith, Director of Music, text by Michael Perry, music by George J Webb, Hope Publishing Co., used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246

## Changing of the Colors

**Pastor:** As we look around the sanctuary, we see all the changes in decoration. Last year we learned the meaning and symbolism of each element of the many items we use to decorate and prepare our sanctuary, as well as our homes, for Christ's arrival at Christmas. The change in decoration also symbolizes a deeper change in our attitude and outlook. During Advent we reflect in anticipation of the promise to come and we wait with hope, seeking the change that Jesus ushers into the world.

Colors, altar paraments or coverings, and banners are some of the most important visual ways Christians have used to express their faith in worship. The objective in covering the Communion Table with cloths of various colors was to help focus the attention of worshippers on the special nature of Christ as the Perfect Sacrifice. In the early days of Christian worship, Advent and Christmas were seen as a somber time, much like Lent is today. Purple table coverings were used to speak of Christ's Kingship, but the mood was somber.

As Christians began to share their celebration of Christmas with their non-Christian neighbors they began to focus on the joy of the Christmas event. As the emphasis of Christmas began to change to one of joyful celebration the color used also changed to express Christ the King in that more happy way. While purple is still used in some churches and at certain times, many Christian churches now use blue to speak of the Kingship of Christ when the occasion is joyful. At Advent we wait with anticipation and celebration for our coming Christ. At Advent we wait with anticipation and celebration for our coming Christ... so our hearts sing out, "O Come Emmanuel!"

### Hymn [\*O Come, O Come, Immanuel\*](#) (Lyric Video)

Recorded live and posted to YouTube by the Sunday 7pm Choir at St. Francis de Sales Church in Ajax, Ontario, Canada

## Lighting the Advent Candle

*Pastor Glenn and Harriet Koscho*

**Pastor:** As we begin our season of Advent, we take a moment to reflect on the hope we have in the arrival of the Christ child among us.

**Harriet:** Jesus came to make change: change in the world, but just as importantly, change in each one of us.

**Pastor:** As we light this first candle of Advent, let us find hope in the changed reality that we strive for each day as followers of Christ.

*(Pastor lights candle)*

**Harriet:** And like this candle, may we be beacons of hope in a world that often seems hopeless.

## Hanging of the Greens

As we prepare for the hope that comes at Christmas, we begin to decorate our worship space in anticipation. Rather than one big effort, this year we will take time each week to decorate our space together. May this be a time of fellowship and joy as we focus this week on the windows. I've put one together as an example and we can work together using the items on the back pew. I hope we can continue our fellowship together after the service with some light refreshment as well. After we have the windows decorated, we'll continue our service by coming together for our morning prayer time.

**(Musical Interlude)**

### [Count Your Blessings](#)

Music by Edwin O. Excell, arrangement by Sharon Wilson, played by Annie Center

## A Time of Prayer

### Joys and Concerns

### Pastoral Prayer

We seek the mighty God in the most unlikely places as a child in a stable, and in an empty tomb. May God hear these prayers, which come from the unlikely corners of our lives.

Give us ears to hear, O God, and eyes to watch, that we may know your presence in our midst during this holy season of joy as we anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ. Amen.

O God of all the prophets, you herald the coming of the Son of Man by wondrous signs in the heavens and on the earth. Guard our hearts from despair so that we, in the company of the faithful and by the power of your Holy Spirit, may be found ready to raise our heads at the coming near of our redemption, the day of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Gospel Reading     Luke 21:25-36 NRSV

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory.

Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees;

as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near.

So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly,

like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth.

Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

### **Message – *Approaching Change* - Rev Glenn Brumbaugh**

So here we are in Advent. That confusing season of the church calendar when pastors in every church steel themselves for that age old question, “Why can't we sing more Christmas songs this month?” The struggle that assails every pastor at every congregation every year without fail. So you may be wandering, what is the big deal, why do pastors engage in this perennial battle with their flock?

Well, it stems from a popular misconception of what Advent is really all about. Over the centuries, this period of waiting and reflection in the church calendar has largely been

absorbed into the ever expanding cultural celebrations surrounding the Christmas holiday. However, Advent is something entirely different.

Advent is not Christmas. I'll repeat that. Advent is not Christmas. And while it is a season for preparing for that very significant event, it is something unique on it's own.

Unfortunately, in extending the theme of preparation, we've gradually included decorating our sanctuaries and buildings at Advent with all the trappings of Christmas, so it can be very confusing to walk into to a scene with a Christmas tree and wreaths and still grasp that Advent has an entirely different focus than Christmas.

As I mentioned earlier when I changed the vestment colors, Advent has traditionally been a time of somber reflection on what the meaning and implications of the arrival of the Christ child are, and how that single event gave hope and permanently changed the course of human events. Advent is how we keep "the Christ in Christmas." And while Advent is representative of waiting, it's also reflective of a sense of longing.

In order to truly appreciate the significance of this period of waiting for redemption, it's helpful to examine what waiting really meant and still means, for those who long and yearn for divine deliverance. Running throughout the biblical narrative is an ongoing sense of waiting in anticipation for a change to come.

Jeremiah truly speaks to this sense of longing that plays out throughout the First and Second testaments. Jeremiah was written for a people who had been taken captive, beaten, and dragged far away from their homes to a foreign land. Their Temple and holy city had been razed to the ground. Everything was gone. They cried out in anger and despair, anger at God for seemingly abandoning them, and angry at themselves for falling away from the tenets of their faith.

Jeremiah makes crystal clear the fact that they had strayed from God, from the paths of righteousness and justice. In their grief, they could only see God in looking backwards to the 'good old days.' There seemed to be no promise in the future. Yet through Jeremiah God offers a future hope. There will be a future in God's time and on God's terms. Redemption will come through a son of David. There is light at the end of this very dark tunnel.

Likewise, in our gospel lesson, Jesus is preparing his followers for their own time of darkness and despair. He shares that there is hope to look forward to, that a change will come to make things right again. He uses terminology from the apocalyptic writings of Daniel about the "son of Man" who will come to set things right, while making clear throughout Luke's gospel that he is that person.

For those reading Luke, they would see these dreadful events as already in progress. By the time Luke was written down, the Temple was gone and Jerusalem was yet again sacked and in ruin. Many Jews had fled in Diaspora across the rest of the known world. Yet again, they were without a home, and probably felt abandoned by God. Like their predecessors in Babylon, they probably cried out in despair and anguish, wondering why their God had

forsaken them. They too longed deeply for change. Yet things were only getting worse. Outcast and forsaken by their Jewish brethren as heretics, now they were increasingly facing persecution in the Roman world as well.

The vivid imagery of cataclysm that Jesus used in his teaching in Luke would seem all too real to them in the desperate times they found themselves in. And vivid imagery it was, "...signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among the nations confused by the roaring of the seas and the waves..."

A little known fact you may not have been familiar with, is that the painter Vincent Van Gogh was actually the son of a Dutch minister. He, like his father, actually earned a living for a short time as a preacher.



I'm sure most of us are familiar with this image. This is Van Gogh's painting "Starry Night." And while we may marvel at its beauty as a piece of art, many theologians have suggested that this actually is the artist's representation of this passage from Luke. Notice how the stars and the moon are overemphasized. The clouds themselves look quite a bit like waves, as does the rolling hills surrounding the town, a town whose most prominent feature is

the church steeple. Perhaps Van Gogh was depicting Christ's followers gathered looking for the signs from Luke's gospel. Looking for those new green shoots from the fig tree indicating that the time draws near. Seeing the changes in the moon, the stars, the waves and the ocean. For we too, like those in Babylon, and those in 1st century Judea, long for change as well. We too, despair over what has become of our world, finding ourselves in similar darkness, particularly in this time of pandemic.

Heidi Neumark, a Lutheran Pastor in the the Bronx in New York, describes the longing of Christ's church today, which I will take some liberty to paraphrase here: As we listen to the cries of Jeremiah throughout the scope of his prophecy, we long for the day that is surely coming when God's future will be a reality beyond the violent boastings of the ruling Babylon of this day.

We long for the day that is surely coming when in God's future the poor are not sent to shelters or forced to sleep on the streets. We long for the day that is surely coming when God's future has no space for violence, when we will stop producing body bags because there are no dead soldiers to fill them. We long for the day that is surely coming when God's future affords no room for hate, a day when our world is no longer torn asunder by racism, sexism, and homo and transphobia. As God's people, we long for the confidence of the prophet's words about the righteous future of our God. We long to know the God whom Jeremiah heralds and whom Jesus will incarnate, not a hidden God who refuses to traffic in the human enterprise, but a God who hears God's people when they cry out with

longing, in despair. We long for people to know not the God of religious fanatics or bigots, not a God who enjoys seeing suffering, but the God who, in God's own time, will bring more mercy and justice than we'll ever grasp.

In this time of Advent, let us also look towards the arrival of David's heir. Let us find hope in a restoration of a righteous and just ruler, who epitomizes the purpose of a leader in ensuring justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. But that time has not yet arrived. So let us dwell in our longing and reflect on the change we seek. Change that will arrive in a few weeks in the hope of a babe in a manger. But for now, we reflect, we wait and we long for that day to come. Amen.

## A Call to Serve

The earth distresses. Nations are confused. The power structures we've grown accustomed to are being shaken. And we will not be shaken. We will look up. And be children of the God of Mercy. Let us give of what we have accordingly.

## A Time for Reflection

### [Praise to the Lord](#)

arr. by Sharon Wilson, played by Annie Center,

## The Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of hopeful waiting, we give thanks for all of the ways in which you reveal yourself to us. Help us to clear away the many distractions of this season and offer our whole lives as gifts to you. May these offerings nurture all of the ways in which your promise is breaking into the world in acts of compassion and justice. May these gifts nurture your rule of peace. Amen.

## HYMN

### [Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus](#) 178 (Lyric Video)

written by Charles Wesley, music by Sir John Stainer, performed by the Grace Community Church Sun Valley, California, posted to YouTube by Martijn de Groot

## Commissioning/Benediction

Jeremiah told the people that a shoot would rise from the stump of Jesse. Jesus taught us that something new rises out of what must die. God continues to teach us that all things are made new. There is hope to be found in this world, if we seek it, and if we be it. May we be living hope to one another, forgiving and loving one another, restoring and repairing the world. Go, and live into the Good News, and be good news for each other. Amen.

## Postlude

### [Praise God](#)

Music by Old Hundredth, arrangement by Sharon Wilson,  
Played by Annie Center