

Worship Resources / Keeping The Faith / <https://youtu.be/BH6z0mhe0ro>

4th Sunday of Advent, Year B,

20th December, 2020

2 Samuel 7:1-11,16 CEV / Luke 1:46b-55 CEV

Prelude

[Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming](#)

played by church musician Annie Center,

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Intro / Call to Worship

Happy are we who hear the joyful call to worship, for we walk in the light of God's presence! Let's worship God together—celebrating who he is and all that he has Done! For God is our strength and our protection, the One in whom we trust.

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 morning we continue our virtual Advent candle lighting as Kristi, lead us in lighting the candle of faith.

Advent Lighting Liturgy Video

Kristi Morris and Royal Jackson

Reader 1: In a world where churches lie empty, doors are shut, and people seem to have no room for religion anymore, God, we call upon you to come.

Reader 2: In a world where so many claim not to believe anymore, we call upon you, El Shaddai, God Almighty, to come.

Reader 1: In this season of Advent, we wait for Your Presence to be felt in our lives again. We await the birth of Jesus, the Savior of All, who comes 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 that our faith may be renewed once again, and may we relive the wonder of your love in our lives. In the name of Jesus the Christ, we pray. Amen.

Music Video [Magnificat - Mary's Song](#) (with lyrics)

Composed by Todd Agnew & performed by Christy Nockels.

Posted to YouTube by mdragon1801

In our reading from 2 Samuel this week, we hear of the promise of God's faithful presence with the people of Israel. As we listen to these words, let's think about how we have experienced God's presence in our own lives.

First Testament Reading / 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 CEV

King David moved into his new palace, and the Lord let his kingdom be at peace.

Then one day, as David was talking with Nathan the prophet, David said, "Look around! I live in a palace made of cedar, but the sacred chest has to stay in a tent."

Nathan replied, "The Lord is with you, so do what you want!"

That night, the Lord told Nathan to go to David and give him this message:

David, you are my servant, so listen to what I say. Why should you build a temple for me?

I didn't live in a temple when I brought my people out of Egypt, and I don't live in one now. A tent has always been my home wherever I have gone with them.

I chose leaders and told them to be like shepherds for my people Israel. But did I ever say anything to even one of them about building a cedar temple for me?

David, this is what I, the Lord All-Powerful, say to you. I brought you in from the fields where you took care of sheep, and I made you the leader of my people.

Wherever you went, I helped you and destroyed your enemies right in front of your eyes. I have made you one of the most famous people in the world.

I have given my people Israel a land of their own where they can live in peace, and they won't have to tremble with fear any more. Evil nations won't bother them, as they did

when I let judges rule my people. And I have kept your enemies from attacking you. Now I promise that you and your descendants will be kings.

I will make sure that one of your descendants will always be king.

Scripture Video [2 Samuel 7:1-11,16](#)

The Lord's Message To David Lectionary bible reading

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, let's continue to keep the Bowers in our prayers as they adapt to Carol's new reality and adjust to hospice care at home.

Let's also continue to keep Matthew Schultz in prayer as he continues treatment.

We also remember those who are unable to be with loved ones for the holidays this year. May they find meaningful ways to connect with family and friends, and find God's comfort and peace in the isolation of quarantine.

May God also bless those who are battling this current disease, not only those infected, but their caregivers as well.

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

Pastoral Prayer

In the hushed anticipation of your coming, O Lord, remind us that you are always with us, that like Joseph we might always be eager to fulfill your will, and be eager to pray:

O God, in days to come the mountain of your house will be established, and your joy shall reign. We pray for the church, that you might teach us your ways and that we might walk in your paths.

Out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and you, O God, shall judge between the nations. We pray for our nation, and all nations, that your peace would be manifest in every corner of the earth.

In your Kingdom, O Lord, wolves lie down with lambs and children play with serpents without fear. We pray for the sick, the suffering, and those in distress of any kind (especially...); that you would heal all injuries, comfort all grief, and settle all wrongs.

In the fullness of time, O God, you sent your son, to be born of our sister Mary. And his name was Emmanuel: God With Us. We thank you for your Presence with us, and we pray that you might be always present with those whom we love but see no longer.

Come Lord Jesus, and hear our prayer.

O Christ, hear our prayers, restore us, and show us the glorious light of your countenance, that we might be saved. Come Lord Jesus. Amen.

In our gospel lesson this morning, we hear Mary's beautiful song praising the faithfulness of the God who blesses her as the mother of the Christ child. As we hear these words from Luke, let's reflect on the blessings of our own lives, and how we have shared those blessings with others.

Gospel Lesson Luke 1:46b-55 CEV

Mary said: With all my heart I praise the Lord,
and I am glad because of God my Savior.

He cares for me, his humble servant. From now on, all people will say God has blessed me.

God All-Powerful has done great things for me, and his name is holy.

He always shows mercy to everyone who worships him.

The Lord has used his powerful arm to scatter those who are proud.

He drags strong rulers from their thrones and puts humble people in places of power.

God gives the hungry good things to eat, and sends the rich away with nothing.

He helps his servant Israel and is always merciful to his people.

The Lord made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his family forever

Scripture Video / Luke 1:46b-55 / *Magnificat: Mary's Song Of Praise*

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4l-tKTipXc>

Message – Keeping the Faith

So are you all ready for Christmas? All those last minutes items bought and wrapped and this year, shipped? Grocery shopping done? Completely stress-free now, right? Unfortunately, there never seems to be enough time to get everything done that needs done. For many, the stress level goes through the roof at this time of year. People with young families on normal days can feel pulled pretty thin, with both parents working and everyone struggling with virtual learning, virtual work, virtual everything. Adding the “joy” of Christmas to that can really put people out of sorts. Unfortunately, this added stress can leave people feeling lonely and fragmented, as they try to add more to an already delicate juggling.

This morning I'd like us to take a step back and embrace this last Sunday of Advent, this last moment of waiting and reflection before the joy and celebration of Christmas. Take a deep breath and give some thought to the characters in our gospel story today. Elizabeth and Mary know what it is to be stressed and out of sorts, in fact, they were probably the first to stress out over the holidays. By rights, neither one of them should be pregnant. Earlier in Luke 1, we hear of Mary's cousin Elizabeth, who is way past the time she should be concerned with being pregnant, and Mary wasn't even married yet when this all started.

In a patriarchal society like theirs, everything fell to them to handle with regards to their pregnancy. There weren't mommy groups and baby showers, i.e., mad classes for them and their husbands. Most likely, Elizabeth's husband Zechariah and Mary's fiancée Joseph gave little thought to what their spouses were going through, men didn't worry about those things. It would be a lonely time for each of them. Yet they both were carrying babies that were both miracles in their own right. They knew they were doing God's work, and while that probably gave them a certain sense of being special, of having purpose, it also would be a little scary. What did it all mean?

These two marginalized women are the most unlikely of prophets, yet that's exactly what they become in today's lesson. The fact that a carpenter's wife and the wife of a sidelined priest issue some of the most poignant prophecy in the New Testament could almost be considered absurd by normal standards.

The image is extraordinary, almost comical. Young pregnant Mary gives voice to a song, called the Magnificat, for the ages, a song that invites beyond our realistic

expectations and our numb imaginations. She herself seems amazed at what has happened, as her opening words indicate, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.” And the rest of her song announces the upside-down world that God has inaugurated. “He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.” Mary proclaims the topsy-turvy future of God as an already accomplished fact – possibly because that future can already be glimpsed in God's choice of Mary as the bearer of the Messiah, this unimportant peasant girl from a backwater part of a backwater country. The song proclaims the reality and promise the singer embodies. In fact the song ironically foresees the end of the very social structures that give Mary some value in society, her ability to produce a son and male heir that would ensure her own welfare.

As we learned studying Ruth this summer, producing a male heir is what gave a woman value. The Magnificat was the inspiration for how the Christmas holiday was observed for centuries, in celebrating what they called “The Feast of Fools.” The Feast of Fools, in fact, became a literal acting out of the Magnificat, an odd witness to the God whose inclination is to topple human power structures and to raise the downtrodden to a position of honor and feasting.

Throughout medieval and early modern Europe, Christmas was a time for a festive reversal of status. These celebrations mocked the pretensions of the elite in both the church and society. As late as 1685, lay brothers and sisters would put their vestments on inside out, hold the books upside down, wore spectacles with orange peel rounds instead of lenses, blew the ashes from the sensors on each other and replaced the liturgy readings with gibberish. Some may see that as sacrilegious but it was pointing out that God always reverses the roles of the proud and pretentious. The drawback of those fun and festive occasions was that they were just that, parties that made fun and lampooned the powers that be, but when the booze and party favors were gone, nothing had changed. The hungry and downtrodden were still the hungry and downtrodden and the fat and proud were still fat and proud.

The change Mary prophesied, that the child she bore initiated, remained unfulfilled. The faithful that emerged from the Jesus movement initially started out on a good footing. They shared their resources with those in need, they helped their neighbors, often at the risk of their own well-being.

During plagues in Roman times, Christians stood out by risking their own health to care for those who were inflicted. However, they eventually became part of the power structure themselves. Under Constantine, they became the state religion of Rome. And with that recognition and acceptance, they soon adopted the same reasoning and rationale of the worldly powers that sponsored them. They went from the upside-down kin-dom of God to the Christendom based on this world's customs and values. They lost that separate sense of community and support.

When Mary went to visit Elizabeth, not only did they share prophecy, they shared support for each other. These two women struggling alone suddenly had a sense of community, of compassion and understanding for each other. They modeled what it means to be part of God's family, of being in community with each other. That may be one of the most important tenets of the faith that has been lost over time.

So much of our focus today is on ourselves, on our own salvation, on our own needs. We often put our neighbor's needs off, or choose to not even see the need around us. But now we find ourselves in different times, for many more desperate times. A global pandemic has cost many their jobs and sense of security. Many wonder how they will pay their rent, how they will feed themselves, whether they can make it. Others may still be working but wonder if they will still be employed in a month, three months, a year, if things don't turn around soon.

This Christmas for many, is stressful in a much different, more profound way than the usual stress of commercialism and schedules. I talked about the focus of the early church on being Christ to the world in which they found themselves. As we struggle to continue being Christ's presence in a quarantined world, we need to ask ourselves some serious questions. How can we recapture that sense of caring community? Where can we model the upside down kin-dom of God that lifts the downtrodden?

My question to you is, what can we do to be the community of faith, the representatives of God's kin-dom that we're called to be, in a world that is so different from what it was just a year ago? What are we as a congregation willing and able to do to model compassion in new ways to fit a new situation? What ideas do you have or what options can you imagine for us? I've been preaching for a month now on the change we await that comes with the arrival of the Christ child next week. My challenge for you is how can we as people of God be that change, in our own lives, and as a community of faith? May God's spirit motivate and lead us to be the lights we are called to be in this world. 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 we can be the church in this new reality, and how we can use the resources we do have to make a difference here and now, to shine Christ's light into the darkness of the world around us.

A Time for Reflection

[Reflection on the Word \[video\]](#) [Find Us Faithful](#)

played by church musician Annie Center

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving God, our spirits do rejoice in all your gracious acts towards us, most of all, the event we so look forward to—the wonderful and precious gift of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks for the willingness of Mary to believe that the impossible could and would happen. Help us to have a like faith. Open our hearts and minds to believe that your promises can come to surprising fulfillment. Show us how we can best serve you with mercy and in humility, empowering people to live lives of dignity and worth.

Blessing/Assurance

God's steadfast love endures forever. God remains faithful, even when we do not. Know that God's love never ends and is always with you. The light shines and cannot be extinguished. You are forgiven, loved, and restored. As we approach Christmas, may you be filled anew with wonder and awe, and know that God's love is making all things new. Amen.

Postlude

[O Come All Ye Faithful](#)

performed by church musician Annie Center,

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