

AUGUSTANA  
where Lutherans and Anglicans worship together  
Advent 2, December 6, 2020

**Welcome** to worship. ...

**Thanks** just like on a Sunday morning when we worship together there are many who make it possible for us to worship together. Look at the end of the video for all those names.

GREETING

As we begin our time of worship we ask that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us.

ADVENT SONG & LIGHTING OF CANDLE

Advent is a time of waiting and preparation. We light the second candle to remind us to prepare.

**The two candles are lit. the song is sung**

We give you thanks, O God, for it is you who called forth light,  
and you led your people Israel with wonders and with signs.  
**Lead us in this season's waiting with wonders speaking hope  
and signs of Jesus' incarnation;**  
For your mercy is our light and your compassion is our guide  
**And with creation we glorify you  
through the Son and in the Spirit now and evermore. Amen.**

Let us pray: God of peace, we look forward to the time when the earth is full of your glory, when righteousness is at home and peace reigns in all the world. May we prepare for that day by working together for justice and peace. Amen.

CHILDREN'S TIME

READINGS

**A reading from Isaiah 40:1-11**

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.  
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,

that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.  
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

A voice says, 'Cry out!'

And I said, 'What shall I cry?'

All people are grass,  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.  
The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand for ever.  
Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,  
lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
'Here is your God!'  
See, the Lord GOD comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.  
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,

and carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead the mother sheep.

*Word of God, Word of life*

### ***Thanks be to God***

Choir Women: "Lift up your Heads"

ALLELUIA

GOSPEL

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark 1:1-8      **Glory to you O Lord**

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,  
'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;

the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight" ',

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

The Gospel of our Lord; **Praise to you, O Christ**

MEDITATION

I saw a T-shirt once with the words on front: "*Jesus is coming! Look busy!*"

John was the voice of one crying in the wilderness not "Look busy" but "Prepare the way of the Lord." But preparation does not mean "hurry up!"

I have to be honest with you here – this is an area where I have trouble practicing what I preach... I know that with my intellect – my thinking – that preparation does not mean hurry up, but in my reality getting ready – preparing -- usually means hurry up .... People are coming for supper? Quick get out the vacuum .... Cook & clean .... Hurry, hurry, hurry.

But John wasn't interested in our busyness – our “hurry, hurry, hurry.” John was simply echoing the call made to the Jews who had been living far from home in exile in Babylon ... The message to the Jews was that the time is coming when you will be able to return home to the promised land, but be ready ... and to be ready meant – not “busy busy busy,” BUT: keep your faith alive so that when it is time to journey home you will be prepared to trust God in leading you home.

John the Baptist was, in his own time, calling out to those who were exiled in a different way: they were living in the promised land, but they had become separated from God. John was calling them to a different homecoming ... not a physical homecoming, but a spiritual homecoming ... be prepared for God's presence in your lives!

And we in our time hear this John's call for preparation in our own way.

- During covid 19 living in exile
- Even without covid 19 the church lives in changing times. I don't exactly know what the church of the future is going to be like. So how does one prepare for something you don't know? I'm not altogether sure. But I am pretty sure it doesn't mean that we need to get busier. Or hurry, hurry, hurry.

Our scripture readings compare preparing for the future to road building. A number of years ago I was driving on highway 11 regularly – I was providing interim ministry to a parish north of Saskatoon. That highway was in the process of being twinned and I got to watch the process .... That sloooow process.

It seemed like such a long and involved process. And I guess there was a reason for all the steps along the way. A good road needs a solid foundation with

good drainage so that the surface doesn't wash away or crumble because of our harsh climate or under the weight of heavy traffic. If the road isn't done right ... if the preparation is inadequate ... that road will not last. Good road building takes time.

Just like in roadbuilding, we need a foundation that will not crumble in difficult times, we need good support to carry a heavy load.

Three things that help to prepare a firm foundation:

- Faith story: Know the story of your faith .... what you believe. Be willing to talk about what you believe. Be willing to learn and grow. Knowing that you belong to God.
- Community -- Supportive community – to have one and to be one – a community that worships, prays, and reflects on God's Word together.
- Service -- To be part of the community that feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, welcomes the outcast.

These are the things that I think of when I hear "Prepare the way of the Lord." None of them are instantaneous ... they are all lifelong disciplines. Road building is ongoing hard work. This is the kind of road building that will prepare us for the future only God knows.

I would like to tell you a story about a man who took John's call to prepare seriously:

This man died went to heaven. St. Peter met him at the Pearly Gates "Here's how it works," says St. Peter. "You need 100 points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good things you have done ... all the road building things that you have done .... And I give you a certain number of points for each item, depending on how good it was. When you reach 100 points, you get in."

"Okay," says the man, thinking this is going to be easy, "Well, I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart."

“That’s wonderful,” says St. Peter, “that’s worth 3 points”

“Three points!?” the man exclaims, “Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my tithe and service.”

“Terrific!” says St. Peter. “That’s certainly worth a point”

“One point?” Now the man was getting worried. “I started a soup kitchen in my city and worked in a shelter for the homeless.”

“Fantastic, that’s good for two more points,” says St. Peter.

“Two points?!” the man cries, “at this rate the only way I’ll get into heaven is by the grace of God.”

“Bingo! 100 points!,” cries St. Peter, “Come on in!”

All the preparation we might do, all the road building leads us to what we can never really prepare for: God’s grace which reaches out to us and draws us in.

Prayer: God of grace, once again we ask you to prepare us for your presence in our lives. May our lives reflect your love of all the earth. Amen.

Musical interlude

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Pastor: Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.

All: we confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbour; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.

Pastor: People of God, hear this glad news by God’s endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free – free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God’s love, + comforted by Christ’s peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.

All: AMEN.

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us join hearts and voices together in prayer. Each short prayer will end with the words "Hear us, O God" and you can make the prayer your own by responding "**Your mercy is great.**"

God of power and might, comfort your people and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

*A brief silence.*

Faithful God, you teach us to wait for you with faithfulness and patience. Sustain and support us in our doubts and questions. Nurture our faith as we discern and enact your mission. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Loving God, you set the stars in the sky and breathe life into the earth. Renew the face of creation where it is need of your healing touch. Mend the wounds of environmental damage and restore balance to ecosystems so that all creation can declare your praise. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Steadfast God, you never tire of seeking justice. Where people suffer from discrimination, judgement and injustice, speak words of truth and comfort. Lead us toward a world where faithfulness will sprout underfoot and righteousness rain down from above. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Leading God, you ask us to make uneven ground smooth. Make even the disparities between your people. Sustain and support people with physical and intellectual disabilities. Accompany disability advocates who work for a world accessible to all. Teach us to celebrate the great diversity in our midst. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Tender God, you know sorrow and joy alike. We pray for those in our families and congregation who are not joyful in this holiday season. Comfort those who grieve, be a companion to all who are lonely, tend those who are struggling with depression or sick especially: Elsie, Audrey, Orville and Carol, Hannah, Bruce, Gloria, Logan, William, Marcus, Bishop Gomez, Brodie, Karin, Anthony, Robert, Curtis, Linda, Marci, Gayle, Evelyn, Lisa, Danielle, Inger, Anne Jane, Deanna, Ron, Marlene, Martha, and all those we name aloud or in the silence of our hearts .....*(a pause to offer time to name others)*.

gather all people in your healing embrace. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all people who care for others in our community and around the world. Especially we pray for health care workers, care givers, and all who work in essential

services. Fill them with compassion and give them the strength and energy to continue their work during stressful times. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the Luther Special Care Home, Rehoboth Care home and Oliver Lodge and all places that are dealing with covid 19 outbreaks. Support residents and staff and public health workers as they go through outbreak. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Comfort all who mourn. We pray for Faith Rohrbough on the death of her brother-in-law Bob. Comfort his family Bea, Christie, Ken and Natalie. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Eternal God, we give thanks for the saints who have prepared your way in the wilderness and taught us to continue faithful work *especially Nicholas of Myra*. Make their generous lives an example for all. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Knowing how God loves us as a Mother and a Father we pray in the words Jesus taught us:

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

May the blessing of God who is Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always. AMEN.

DISMISSAL

In this season of active waiting: Go in Peace to love and serve the Lord: THANKS BE TO GOD

SENDING SONG "On Jordan's Banks" # 1, 4, 5

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
announces that the Lord is nigh.  
Awake and harken, for he brings  
glad tidings of the King of kings!



Stretch forth your hand, our health restore,  
and make us rise to fall no more.

O let your face upon us shine  
and fill the world with love divine.

All praise to you, eternal Son,  
whose advent has our freedom won,  
whom with the Father we adore,  
and Holy Spirit, evermore.

THANKS:

Worship Assistants: Ezekiel Blaser, Katie Ottley

Musicians: Deborah Buck, Augustana St. Timothy choir women

Technician: Bryan Tastad, Greg Fowlie-Neufeld

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