

## AUGUSTANA

where Lutherans and Anglicans worship together  
Advent 4, December 20, 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

At last! The fourth Sunday in Advent!

*A different kind of advent waiting ... vaccination. It's here and but it is not here yet. We still wait.*

As we light the fourth candle we are reminded that Jesus, the light of the world, is coming to us.

### **All four 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 love, you have sent your Son as the light of the world. Even now that light is breaking in upon us. May we reflect the light of your love, even as we wait for you to come again. Amen.

### CHILDREN'S TIME

- I have this tiny globe. Here we are on it. Here is Australia. Are we on the top of the world? And Australia on the bottom? Or is it the other way around us on the bottom and them on the top?

- So if wealth were like that .... Poor people are on the bottom of the “having money” scale. Rich people are on the top of the “having money” scale. Which would you rather be? Probably not on the bottom.
- In many place in the Bible we are told that God is going to switch things around and the poor will be rich and the rich will be poor. The weak will become powerful and the powerful will become weak. Mary sings a song about that too. *“God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.”*
- Does it make sense? Maybe yes, maybe no. But if you’re poor or weak it sounds like a good idea. If you’re rich and powerful it makes no sense at all.
- And sometimes God doesn’t make sense to us
- We talk about a Mighty God and a Merciful God and a Loving God but we don’t ever talk about a Sensible God. That is a bit confusing
- But we are getting closer to celebrating the time when God came near to humanity. Near so that we could understand this confusing God a bit better. We learn about God through Jesus.

#### READINGS

### **A reading from Romans 16:25-27**

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the

Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever! Amen.

*Word of God, Word of life*

***Thanks be to God***

ALLELUIA

Please join me in singing ..... "Wait for the Lord"

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near;

Wait for the; Lord; be strong, take heart (X 2)

GOSPEL

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke 1:26-38    **Glory to you O Lord**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will

overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

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

MEDITATION

It sometimes seems to me that we live within a very narrow range. In the summer it's too hot and in the winter it is too cold. We are like Goldilocks looking for the perfect bowl of porridge: this one is too hot .... This one is too cold .... This one is just right. Although, for some, there is no bowl of porridge in the whole world that is just right ... porridge not always being a popular dish.

So maybe salt would be a better example: there is also a narrow range in the use of salt. Too little salt and the dish is bland ... too much salt and the dish is ruined (blech). The salt needs to be just right. It is a fine balance.

Mary's pregnancy was also a fine balance. It occurred within a narrow range as well. Any pregnancy lies within a narrow range. It can be viewed as a blessing of new life ... a wondrous miracle .... Or a pregnancy can be a curse and the possibility of a death sentence. It all depends on your starting point.

**Mary chose blessing.**

The other day I was reading a Christmas story book from our Sunday school library. The storybook is adamant that Mary and Joseph were married some time before Jesus was born. I should have not been surprised as the storybook was

published in 1964. But Mary and Joseph were not exactly married, nor were they completely unmarried. Their relationship was somewhere in between. And the in-between-ness of their relationship had the potential to be deadly for Mary. Or at least very difficult. And yet, **Mary chose blessing**. Her song reflects that:

    `My soul magnifies the Lord,  
    and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for God has looked with favour on the lowliness of God's servant.  
    Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
    and holy is God's name. ....

    God has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
    God has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
    and lifted up the lowly;  
    God has filled the hungry with good things,  
    and sent the rich away empty.

Mary's story and her song of praise have always upset the status quo – the way things are.

In a class I took with Lois Wilson, the former moderator of the United church of Canada, she told a story about a visit she made to Argentina. It was during the time of the Junta – the dirty war. She was supposed to be leading an Advent worship service on the radio and the text was Mary's song. The broadcast was interrupted because the military government thought Mary's words were too dangerous. The powerful become weak ... the rich become poor?! No way! That would just rile people up ... pull the plug. And they did. The radio broadcast went dead.

Mary's words are dangerous. Her words are just as dangerous for us as her pregnancy was for her. Both challenge how everything is done ... both challenge us to be part of a faith that turns the world upside down. Shakes things up.

This song that comes to us from a not-all-the-way-married pregnant woman. A woman who Christians hold in great honour. If nothing else, this keeps us from becoming "holier than thou" or people who are ignorant of our own hypocrisy in this world.

But it is even more revolutionary than that: who wants to be poor or weak ...in so many ways Mary's song makes no sense. As much as we would like to be part of the shake up that makes the poor rich and the weak strong and powerful, we are also part of the rich who want things to stay the same ... the powerful who don't want to be weak. We have this competing force at work within us. We want good to happen for all, but not if it means we have to give up what we have. Equal measures of blessing and curse.

If we are poor or weak, Mary's song is less complicated. We cheer, "Bring it on!" It is 100% blessing.

As we hear Mary's song what do we hear? What do we choose: blessing or curse? Let us, like Mary, chose blessing ... mixed up and confusing as it is for most of us.

I would like to close with words from the refrain of the hymn "Canticle of the Turning (hymn 723 ELW) *"My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn. Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn."* Amen.

HYMN "The Angel Gabriel # 265 verses: 1-3

The angel Gabriel from heaven came, with wings as drifted snow, with eyes as flame; “All hail to thee, O lowly maiden Mary, most highly favored lady.” Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head; “To me be as it pleaseth God,” she said, “My soul shall laud and magnify God’s holy name.” Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

#### 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, fulfill your promise and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

*A brief silence.*

Gracious God, all generations call you blessed. In this holy season we pray for our neighbors of other denominations and faiths that all may worship in peace. We pray also for the those who work in the Anglican and ELCIC national offices to support the ministry of local churches. Inspire the faith of their people. Cultivate understanding among us and strengthen us in love and service to our community. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creator God, you scatter the proud. Everything we have belongs first to you. Bless and protect the seas, mountains, plains, forests, skies, and soils that surround us. Give us humility as we tend them. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Righteous God, you humble the powerful and lift up the lowly. We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they amplify the voices of people in need. Guide all people entrusted with

leadership, to create societies in which everyone can flourish. Protect all refugees, especially the Iqbal and Alhamad-Wahid families. 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. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Compassionate God, we pray for all who live in vulnerable circumstances: the homeless, the unemployed and under employed, those living in outbreak in care homes and prisons. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Healing God, you pour out mercy to all who cry out to you. Surround everyone in need of healing in body, mind, or spirit with your tender presence 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.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

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, essential workers, and those who are undertaking the immense task of vaccinating our province, country, and the world. Fill them with compassion and give them the strength and energy to continue their work. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for international seminary student Tewodros Gebrehiwot and his family as they prepare to move to Saskatoon in the near future. Be with them as they travel and as they adjust to quarantine and winter in Canada. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

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Eternal God, you are faithful to the promises you made to our forebears. We give thanks for the ministry of Katharina von Bora Luther and other ancestors who organized, planned, dreamed, encouraged, and reached out as they served you. We give thanks for the bold leadership of female leaders in our own time. Inspire others with their steadfast witness. 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.**

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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 "In the bleak Midwinter" #294 all verses

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,  
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;  
heav'n and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign;  
in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.

What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb;  
if I were a wise man I would do my part;  
yet what I can I give him - give my heart.

**THANKS:**

**Worship Assistants:** Ezekiel Blaser, Chris Martin

**Musicians:** Deborah Buck, Augustana St. Timothy choir

**Technicians:** Bryan Tastad, Greg Fowlie-Neufeld

The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came, Basque Carol. Harm. by Charles E Pettman, 1865-1943; © 1961 H. Freeman and Co. Text: Sabine Baring-Gould

In the Bleak Midwinter, Tune: Gustav T. Holst (1874-1934) Text: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), public domain

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