

WORSHIP November 29, 2020

(To watch the videotaped version of the worship service, click the link below)

<https://youtu.be/QWzPDRodyOO>

(To read the service, continue on from here)

GREETING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP

Worship is a time to learn the ways of God.

As God's love is genuine, may our love toward one another be authentic.

Worship is a time to be caught up in the Spirit of God.

We call upon God to instill within us a spirit of generosity, hospitality, and hope.

Worship is a time to nurture peacefulness within and among ourselves.

We pray for a humbleness of heart and a willingness to forgive and receive forgiveness.

May this time of worship nurture us in the ways of God.

A BRIEF CONFESSION

If we say we have no sin, if we believe we are not broken; we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

God of forgiveness, God of healing ... fill us with your truth, your grace.

We trust that your mercy is our forgiveness, your compassion our healing.

God of forgiveness, God of healing ... fill us with your truth, your grace.

We live in the power of a forgiving God.

We live in the presence of Jesus the Christ ... we are forgiven, thanks be to God. Amen.

GREETING

The Lord be with you

Be filled with the spirit of God today.

We worship to open our hearts for God's blessing.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

1st Reading

Isaiah 64:1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.

You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

2nd Reading

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

To the leader: on Lilies, a Covenant. Of Asaph. A Psalm.
Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth
before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.
Stir up your might,
and come to save us!

Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?
You have fed them with the bread of tears,
and given them tears to drink in full measure.
You make us the scorn of our neighbors;
our enemies laugh among themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one whom you made strong for yourself.
Then we will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call on your name.

Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

MUSICAL OFFERING – Kristan Youn

Gospel reading

Mark 13:24-37

'But in those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

SERMON – Pastor Joseph Dillion

1st Sunday of Advent, Nov. 29th, 2020. "Look for the Signs!" Bethany

I suspect many of us can remember the excitement we had when we turned 15 ½ (or in some cases earlier) and could start to learn about driving! One of the first things we did was to get the driver's manual for our state, and we studied it more thoroughly than for any test we had at school for sure. One of the most important parts of the test was the part dealing with signs. Some we knew from an early age, like the stop sign. But we had to learn many more so we could drive safely on the highways and country roads where we lived. We were told that not knowing what the signs meant could mean we could get into a serious accident or worse. We were told how important it was to know the signs so we could get home safely. And for the most part we listened.

In today's Gospel we are told of another set of signs that we as the people of God need to be aware of. The signs that tell us to remember that God is still in charge. We begin each new Church year with words similar to these. Words that are not comfortable to hear—especially in a year such as this where chaos seems to reign both in the natural world and the world of humanity. These words are not for the faint of heart for they are words that speak of the end of things as we know them. They are frightening, terrifying signs that speak of God being on the move once again in powerful, forceful ways! Gone is the gentle Jesus, if Jesus was always gentle—don't think so! Jesus is making clear that we need to be watchful for the signs of His coming again.

And where have heard that phase—Be watchful—for the last four weeks, the parables that we have heard have all spoken about being watchful for we don't know the time, but we need to be ready, and there will be signs so that we can prepare and there will be no excuse if one is not ready.

We know even in our present world the consequences of not being prepared for work; for school; for relationships. Daniel Muller tells of a young couple who thought they were in love but weren't prepare for the relationship of marriage. In his book, ***Just Follow the Signs***, he writes, "*Sometimes the consequences of not being ready are truly painful and full of sorrow. This was the case of a young man and a young woman who just divorced and look at each other through tear-filled eyes and confess to each other: 'I guess I just wasn't ready for us to be married!' They wanted to remind others the following, Being ready is a good thing; not being ready is more than terrible!*" Jesus again and again tells his disciples and us that we need to be ready and always watchful.

Being watchful takes effort; takes patience; and being aware that sometimes things aren't as they seem. Jesus here gives us a set of signs that seem impossible to miss: that if we are watchful we would be aware of something happening soon—maybe. There will be turmoil; there are going to be signs in the heavens; there will be signs of dramatic changes in the weather; stars will fall from heaven. And as we look around the world today, the signs are there—indeed they have been there for a very long, long time. A reminder that there is only one who knows when He will bring a close to this time. A reminder that we need to be ready at all times for we don't know when the time will be. As Jesus noted that time will come when we least expect it, like a thief in the night. Many of the people of God weren't ready for Jesus when he came, so my question is to us, Are we going to be anymore ready as God's people when He comes again. In part that is what this Advent season is for. It should be a time when we reflect upon all that Christ has done for us, and what He calls us to do for those around us in His name. We are strengthening our faith through Scripture—self-study or with the technology that enables us to meet with others in these days of pandemic; to be light to those suffering in darkness and fear.

Through it has been centuries since Jesus has walked among us in the flesh, we know that through the Spirit, Jesus walks among us still; in the poor; the sick; the child crying out in pain; through those who suffer hunger; in the eyes of the homeless and the orphan. He there in the suffering of the alitimizer's patient and their family who long to hear a voice of comfort and hope. He is there will us in the bread and the wine. And we watch: "Watch for the night is long. Watch for the foe is strong. Watch, for the treasures dear. Watch for the Lord is near!" Are you watching?

MUSICAL OFFERING – Kristan Youn

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

*We believe in God,
Creator of the universe,
Giver of every good gift,
Author of life itself.*

*We believe in Jesus Christ,
who reminded us of the coming of God's kingdom,
who commanded us to care for those in need,
who taught us to store up treasures in heaven, not on earth,
and who gave us the example of self-giving love.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit,
who inspires us to faithful stewardship of God's gifts and
that God has given us gifts to be shared freely and generously, in a spirit of love and joy.
We believe that faithful stewardship is an act of worship,
a means of praising God who has blessed us abundantly.
We believe that God has great things in store for us,
for it is in giving that we receive. AMEN*

(Allen & Sara Ewing-Merrill, 2004)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... bless our lives, lead us in your ways, gives us hearts for gratitude and service. Fill us with your grace, that what we desire is also what you desire. Grant us the understanding that our hearts' true desire is the love of you. May the love of Christ urge us on, may we walk by faith. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... bless those who govern. Bless the leaders of nations, countries, towns, and cities. Bless all those who lead in all manner of ways – social, political, and religious. Fill the hearts of all with your wisdom. Guide us in the way of justice and integrity for all. Guide us to walk by faith. Holy God, tend to those who suffer in mind, body, and spirit. Tend to the tired, the dying, the poor and the hungry. Help us to follow the love of Christ, a love which urges us on to seek and serve Christ in others. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... We pray for Bethany members on our prayer list. Give them the blessing of your presence amid their times of trial. We pray for our congregation in this time of suspended worship that we will still continue to be a committed community of faith seeking to be the light of Jesus in our community and world. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... We pray for our world in a time of pandemic and societal distress and change. Give our leaders wisdom, compassion, insight, and courage to lead in ways that serve all the people under their charge. We pray for doctors and nurses, EMT's, and all those on the frontline of healthcare amid this COVID-19 pandemic. Give them health, energy, compassion, and the strength to care for those struggling with illness and hospitalization. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Listen to each of us, Lord, as we come to you in a moment of silent prayer

Into your hands, great and compassionate God, we commend all for whom and about which we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OFFERING *(Please mail your weekly offering to the church - 4300 N 82nd St. Scottsdale, AZ 85251)*

PRAYER OF BLESSING

God of all blessing, giver of all good gifts; day by day you shower us with what we need to live and prosper. With glad and generous hearts and in a response of thanksgiving, we return a portion of our wealth. May what we give be a symbol of our gratitude and a blessing of your love for those who may be helped through our offering. AMEN

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom and the power
and the glory, forever and ever. AMEN.**

BENEDICTION

*People of God, look for Jesus!
Seek him as a treasure in this great wide world.
Seek him in the eyes of your loved ones and in the eyes of strangers.
May your heart burn within you as the Lord draws close to you this week.*

DISMISSAL

*Go in Peace ... to live and serve in the way of the cross
Thanks be to God.*