

WORSHIP December 6, 2020

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqM-zarhkKs>

(To read the service, continue on from here)

GREETING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

OPENING HYMN– “*Ready the Way*”

Ready the way, ready the way, ready the way of the Lord.
Make straight the road, raise the valleys, and mountains make low.
Turning from sin, let the broken be whole, and ready the way of the Lord.

Ready the way, ready the way, ready the way of the Lord.
As we wait for you, give us strength to walk in your truth,
So we may love more like you and ready the way for you, Lord.

Ready the way, ready the way, ready the way of the Lord.
Let us see your face; in our hearts we prepare a place.
Come bring this world your mercy and grace as we ready the way for you, Lord.

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.*

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE – 2ND SUNDAY

SCRIPTURE READINGS

1st Reading

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.

2nd Reading

Psalm 85

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.
LORD, you were favourable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you pardoned all their sin.

Selah

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.
Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.
Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.
The LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness will go before him,
and will make a path for his steps.

PSALM RESPONSE - *Psalm 85 "Lord Let Us See Your Kindness"*

Lord, let us see your kindness; Lord, let us see your kindness.

Gospel reading

Mark 1:1-8

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.'

SERMON– Pastor Joseph Dillion

2nd Sunday of Advent, Dec. 6th, 2020. "The Wild One!" Bethany

John the Baptist is probably not someone I would invite to preach some Sunday morning. His unsettling directness would upset most of us; his rigidity would upset those of us who would like to think of ourselves as a little more liberal, and his challenge of authority and undermining of tradition would really tick off those of us who think of ourselves as being a little more conservative. His theology would hardly be considered as orthodox, yet in his day he drew the largest crowds in centuries because many of the Jewish people knew what and who John the Baptist was: a prophet; a man of God, who spoke the word of God.

Through John, God was making it clear that change was coming and that the people of Israel needed to prepare for God word was coming in a new and dynamic way.

John's words from Isaiah rang through the wilderness into the villages, towns, and cities of Judea: Prepare the way of the Lord! Now! Time was running out, for God's Messiah foretold so many centuries before was coming, SOON! John's words were tough because God's message was tough: Repent! Turn your lives around! Times' a wasting!

Yet in spite of the toughness of his message, Mark wants us to know the reason for John's message: the good news of God was coming to his people. The good news that in repentance; in turning our lives around, we ready ourselves for the new life that God is bringing not only to his people, but to all people: Jew and Gentile; slave and free; Black and White and Brown; all will find God's grace and love and forgiveness. Even those who have attempted to limit Gods' actions and love and grace to fit their own concept of what God's grace is all about; what the actions of Jesus are about and what they mean.

As the people of God in this Advent season in the 21st Century of the Christian era; in a time of chaos; pandemic; and division; we are called not only to turn our lives around; not only in spite of all the pressures to put human constructs first in our lives, we are called to remember who we are always to put first in our lives: Jesus the Christ. That we are to be the models for what it means to be a Christian person in these times, as Christ has been our model for how to live our lives as his people. Now is the time to remember by acting as Christ in these times that we are to bring light into the darkness of those who mourn the death of their loved ones in this time of pandemic; to bring hope to those who are waiting to hear good news about their loved ones in the hospital; in the nursing homes. Now is the time that we remember that it is we the people of Christ who are bring a ray of hope to the homeless; to the hungry; to the fearful. Now is the time to remember that it is we who are shine light in the darkness of those searching for God—searching for some spiritual foundation in their lives. It is we who are to remember that while there is judgement, there is also grace; and where there is grace, there is also faith; and where there is faith, there is hope; and where there is hope, there is forgiveness; and where there is forgiveness, there is life with God. And that is indeed Good News!

As Christian People in this season of Advent, "we affirm that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God; that we shall accept one another as Christ accepts us; and that indeed the gift to us is of Christ, so soon to be freshly given again, as we rejoice even in this time of crisis, this time so much like so many former times when all we have to lean on is Christ.

Let us refresh our faith once more through repentance; through confession; through prayer; through reading the Scriptures in this time of Advent. Let us prepare our hearts and minds for Christ's coming and let us live as the people of Christ, giving our world hope and light in this time of chaos in the world. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY – “*Come Lord! Maranatha/Come Now Emanuel*”

Now is the time to wake from sleep; salvation is close at hand.
Moving from night into day, lift up your voices and pray.

*Come, Lord, Maranatha! Come and bring us your peace.
Come, Lord, Maranatha! Come to us; set us free.
Come, Lord, and bring us your peace. (Refrain)*

Cast off the deeds of the dark. Put on the armor of light.
Turn to the source of the day. Lift up your voices and pray:
Refrain

Constantly watch, stay awake. No one can know the time.
Whether at dusk or at dawn, we sing this prayer and song:
Refrain

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.*

CLOSING MUSIC – *“Prepare the Royal Highway”*

Prepare the royal highway; the King of kings is near!
Let every hill and valley a level road appear!
Then greet the King of glory, foretold in sacred story:
Hosana to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!

God's people see him coming: your own eternal king!
Palm branches strew before him! Spread garments! Shout and sing!
God's promise will not fail you! No more shall doubt assail you!
Hosana to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!

Then fling the gates wide open to greet your promised king!
Your king, yet every nation its tribute too may bring.
All lands will bow before him; their voices join your singing:
Hosana to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!

His is no earthly kingdom; it comes from heaven above.
His rule is peace and freedom and justice, truth and love.
So, let our praise be sounding for kindness so abounding:
Hosana to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!

DISMISSAL

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