



Camrose United Church
Sunday December 13, 2020
Advent 3: Joy

Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

Candle Lighting

We light the Christ Candle, aware of God around, among, & within us. In a moment of silence, we prepare ourselves to celebrate God's presence in our community.

☩ Gathering Song: ♪ VU19 **Kindle a flame
Kindle a flame
to lighten the dark
and take all fear away.**

Call to Worship^{HR}

Through the season of Advent, God's voice calls us forward.
Through the stories of then and now and yet to be
we get ready for the coming of God

Advent... **a story of preparation**

Advent... **a story of waiting**

Advent... **the start of a time of settling into**

God's truth and God's promise

Advent... **a journey into our faith, our history, God's love.**

Let us journey into Advent together

☩ Hymn: ♪ VU#820 **Psalm 100: Make a Joyful Noise**

illuminating Advent:⁴

Through our Advent journey,
we bring the light of Christ with us.
Each week, this light reminds us
of the blessings of travelling together
in faith and in life.

On our first Advent Sunday
Christ's light showed us Hope.

(light the Candle)

On our second Advent Sunday
Christ's light showed us Peace

(light the Candle)

This week Christ's light guides us to the candle of Joy

In a world where some seem to have
more than their share of distress or despair

we are called to share God's Joy

Not Joy that is easily purchased or packaged
but Joy that is given without need of return.

We are invited to be joyful and grateful

**to see God's light always with us
on our unknown journey ahead.⁴**

☩ Hymn: 🎵 **VU#7 Hope Is A Star** (Verse 3)

Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn

Telling the world that the saviour is born

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

**The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.**

Scripture Reading(s):

Isaiah 35 Common English Bible (CEB)

Fertile wilderness

35 The desert and the dry land will be glad;

the wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the crocus.

² They will burst into bloom,

and rejoice with joy and singing.

They will receive the glory of Lebanon,

the splendor of Carmel and Sharon.

They will see the Lord's glory,

the splendor of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands,

and support the unsteady knees.

⁴ Say to those who are panicking:

"Be strong! Don't fear!

Here's your God,

coming with vengeance;

with divine retribution

God will come to save you."

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,
and the ears of the deaf will be cleared.
⁶ Then the lame will leap like the deer,
and the tongue of the speechless will sing.
Waters will spring up in the desert,
and streams in the wilderness.
⁷ The burning sand will become a pool,
and the thirsty ground, fountains of water.
The jackals' habitat, a pasture;
grass will become reeds and rushes.
⁸ A highway will be there.
It will be called The Holy Way.
The unclean won't travel on it,
but it will be for those walking on that way.
Even fools won't get lost on it;
⁹ no lion will be there,
and no predator will go up on it.
None of these will be there;
only the redeemed will walk on it.
¹⁰ The Lord's ransomed ones will return
and enter Zion with singing,
with everlasting joy upon their heads.
Happiness and joy will overwhelm them;
grief and groaning will flee away.

Wonderings:

As I read the words of the Prophet I wondered...

Are we ready for Joy?

Are we ready to have our eyes opened, our ears cleared?

Are we ready to become providers of the water of life for someone else?

Feeling held for ransom in our homes, are we looking for the moments of happiness and joy that God sends us?

Are we ready?

Prayer for awareness and Grace.^{HR}

Holy One,
we are getting closer to
our celebration of your coming to be among us.
Some of us expected to be racing through life...
running to buy, running to get somewhere
writing lists and checking them many times.

But now we find ourselves standing still...
with nowhere to go, disappointment in our heart.

Some of us didn't have money for lists,
or family or friends to share with anyway.
We, too, stand with disappointment in our heart.

Forgive us, God

Remind us that this is a time to celebrate
Love in our communities
Love in your world
Love in our hearts.

Help us to take see the opportunities to offer joy.

To throw away lists and instead share some smiles.
To slow down and appreciate the people who surround us.

Help all of us to remember

that Christmas is not about things,
it's about people sharing and caring for each other.
It's about love offered in unexpected ways and places
It's about offering welcome to strangers.
It's about being welcomed by strangers

**May we experience the joy of your presence
on this Advent journey together. Amen.**

Words of Assurance^{HR}

The words of the prophet Isaiah remind us that when we begin our journey with joy, we can make such a difference in God's world.

Isaiah tells us that it is our task

to remind the weak, the unsteady, the worried that God has their back;

that rejoicing in the love of God brings peace to the world not only for ourselves, but all those around us;

that living with joy is loving with God.

Let us remember God's promises

of Hope and Peace and Joy.

God is with us. We are never alone. Thanks be to God.

Luke 1:46-55 The Inclusive Bible

Mary said:

"my soul proclaims your greatness, O God,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior.

⁴⁸ For you have looked with favour upon your lowly servant, and from this day forward all generations will call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your Name.

⁵⁰ Your mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear you.

⁵¹ You have shown strength with your arm.

You have scattered the proud in their conceit;

⁵² You have deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places.

⁵³ You have filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed.

⁵⁴ You have come to the aid of Israel your servant Israel, mindful of your mercy,

⁵⁵ the promise you made to our ancestors, to Sarah and to Abraham and their descendants forever."

Scripture is our song for the journey, passed on from Generation to Generation to guide and inspire.

God calls us to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

Message/Reflections

Gaudete Sunday is the third Sunday of Advent. Gaudete is Latin for “Rejoice.” On this Sunday we hear faith stories about being noisily thankful for what we have.

In the midst of the blue of waiting and preparation, we see a splash of pink, of Joy to remind us to stop and give thanks.

Theologian, Henri Nouwen, said that the difference between joy and happiness is that happiness depends on things and events while joy is “the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing – sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression war or even death – can take that love away.”⁵

In 2014, Pope Francis said that, on the Sunday of Joy instead of fretting about all that hadn’t been done to prepare for Christmas, people should “think of all the good things life has given you.”

We are finding ourselves in a time and place where we are fretting about all the things that we can’t do for Christmas. We are frustrated that we can’t travel, or be together, of share the egg nog, or Grandma’s Christmas Pudding and shortbread. Our world has been turned upside down and it is hard to know what we can do, when it seems as though there is so much we can’t do.

This Sunday of Joy and Rejoicing is so very well placed to remind us to stop and give thanks for what we do have. We are to remember that our happiness is not – or shouldn’t be – wrapped up in things.

We are to remember that we are loved, and loved well, by God.

Nothing can take that love away. How we may experience it in this time of separation and compassion and community caring may be different, but the love is still there.

Our focus scripture for this day of Joy is the Magnificat – the Song of Mary.

Remember her story? The young girl finding herself expecting a child out of wedlock in a time and place where it could have cost her her life? Imagine the worry and panic and fear she must have felt when this happened... (don't tell me Not to Be Afraid, Angels) would she be abandoned? would she be killed? who would believe that this was a gift from God?

For whatever reason, she went to visit a relative – away from home, away from comfort, perhaps away from prying eyes and gossips.

While she was there, this young woman – having experienced fear and looking into an unfamiliar road ahead, stopped to give thanks.

She stopped to name her faith and trust that with God all would be well. She looked around at all the good that was done in life around her. She acknowledged God's gifts and trust in her and her trust in God, but much of her thanksgiving was for others not herself.

As we hear her story, and look at our own unfolding, topsy turvy story, we might wonder how she could give thanks for being placed in a position of such vulnerability, or such uncertainty? What would we do in her position?

I would hope that we could stop and feel our faith: feel the love of God that surrounds us when we need it the most; know that in the worst of times God is standing with us,

holding us, encouraging us to care for others even in our own troubles.

On this Sunday of Joy and Rejoicing, I invite us to delve into our hearts and our heads to a place that can lift us beyond our current boundaries to feel and be the love of God, to be loudly grateful for those people who hold us up and hold us together, to look to what can be and should be done for the sake of others so that they are not abandoned but cared for with great compassion to look at what we do have – no matter how small it may be - - and be grateful for it

The energetic and exultant words of the prophet push us toward moving from a sense of exile to gratitude, reminding us that we can, indeed, be respite, be a safe haven, give of ourselves for the sake and safety of others, be the bringers of love and joy to someone else in our attitude, in our faith, with God's love.

When the world turns upside down, God is there.
When the world turns upside down, God is here.
When God's people need care
we are to be there and here too.

With the courage and joy of young Mary as our example, let us look forward with gratitude for what we do have and not dwell on what we are missing.
Are we ready to have our eyes, ears and hearts opened to see the possibilities to love and be loved before us?

Joy is found in the love of God shared with us and by us.
Let us loudly rejoice, with words and actions that we know, in a world that is, at times, incomprehensible to us
God is with us in all ways and places. Thanks be to God.

☪ Hymn: ♪ MV#120 My Soul Cries Out

Offering Invitation^{HR}

We are called to be the voice
that makes life a joy-filled place.
We do this by living an attitude of abundance
by acknowledging that
we have something we can share with others
We remember that we can't do this alone...
each member of the community offers what they can:
Sometimes it is simply time. Sometimes it is treasure
Each gift is valued, each gift is important

♪ **Music:** Then We Shall Sing for Joy (Ellingboe)

Prayer of Dedication:^{HR/1}

God of Joy,
For the opportunity to give freely, we give thanks.
For the privilege to worship openly, we give thanks.
For the blessings we have received, we give thanks
For your Love, oh God, which makes our heart sing
and with the gifts offered to your church,
we give thanks.
Amen.

☪ **Offertory: ♪ VU#45 Joy Is Now in Every Place** (Verses
1 & 4)

Prayers of God's people, for God's people:^{HR}

♪ VU#16 Mary, woman of the Promise
Mary, woman of the promise,
bearer of your people's dreams,
through your open, willing spirit
waters of God's goodness streamed.

In her song of Joy, Mary, Mother of Jesus
reminded us not only to be joyful
but to remember how the Love of God
makes the world a place of balance, respect and love.
In this time of her life where fear and joy mixed
she gave thanks for the power of God to change the world.

Let our souls magnify God,
and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour.

**God of Mary and Joseph,
You challenge us to give our best for your world
You promise to be with us on the journey.
We give our thanks for your steadfast love.**

Hymn: ♪ VU#16 Mary, woman of the Promise
**Mary, song of holy wisdom,
sung before the world began,
faithful to the Word within,
you carried out God's wondrous plan.**

We pray for all your people in the world.
We pray for world leaders, large and small,
that they will remember
the power of loving all people,
the responsibility to lift the lowly and feed the hungry.
**May they remember your request
to help the least able in our communities.**

Hymn: ♪ VU#16 Mary, woman of the Promise
**Mary, morning star of justice,
mirror of the Radiant Light,
in the shadows of life's journey,
be a beacon for our sight.**

We pray for those who are not
feeling joy in this Advent season
Perhaps because they mourn the loss of loved ones
Perhaps because they do not have the health,
food or safety to lift their spirits.
Perhaps because this Christmas
is unfolding differently than they had planned.
**May they know your strength
lifting them up, and comforting them.**

Hymn: ♪ VU#16 Mary, woman of the Promise
**Mary, model of compassion,
wounded by your offspring's pain,
when our hearts are torn by sorrow,
teach us how to love again.**

We pray for ourselves.
**May we remember that
it is with love that your world will be transformed.**
May we hear our voices
offering hope instead of hurt in your world.
We pray that we may have the courage to be humble,
to offer our best without expecting anything in return.
**May we remember to live our lives in a spirit of
abundance and with gratitude for the company and gifts
you offer us. Amen.**

Hymn: ♪ VU#16 Mary, woman of the Promise
**Mary, woman of the Gospel,
precious home for treasured seed,
help us to be true disciples,
bearing fruit in word and deed.**

☩ Blessing

May the God of love
inspire us to live in harmony with one another.
May the God of Peace fill us with
Hope and joy in believing,
so that we may abound in Love
by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Changing the Christ Candle:

The light of Christ, shining into all the corners of the earth,
showing us where we are and where we are meant to be.
The Spirit of God. Breathe it in...and know that God is with
us wherever we go.

☩ Sending Song: 🎵

MV#222 May the Peace of God Be Your Peace.

Acknowledgements

¹SeasonsFusion Advent • Christmas • 2019-2020

³Advent Unwrapped 2018-2019

⁴Based on: Minute for Mission 2019 (pages 53-55)

⁵Laskey, Mike Jordan (11 December 2014). "[This Gaudete Sunday, Rejoice Despite the Heartbreak All Around Us](#)". *National Catholic Reporter*. Kansas City, Missouri. Retrieved 11 December 2018.

