

December 21, 2020 – Blue Christmas

Welcome

Call to Worship

One: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be. What came to be through God was life, and this life was the light of the world.

All: The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Opening Song – O Little Town of Bethlehem

Scripture Reading

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

3 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

² a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

³ a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

⁴ a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

⁵ a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶ a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to throw away;

⁷ a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
⁸ a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

⁹ What gain have the workers from their toil? ¹⁰ I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. ¹¹ He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

Psalm 22

One: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?

All: O my God, I cry by day but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest

One: In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

All: It was you who brought me from the womb, you who kept me safe on my mother's breast. Since my mother bore me, you have been my God.

One: Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

All: God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted. God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Special Music – Nothing But a Child

Litany of Remembrance

Light one purple candle

One: We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly – their faces and their voices. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation when all Creation waits for the Light.

All: We remember them with love. May God’s eternal love surround them.

Play and sing the first verse of O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Light the second purple candle

One: We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace.

All: We remember that through You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

Play and sing the second verse of O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Light the pink candle.

One: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and the fear, the anger and the pain. We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent

blaming ourselves, and you – for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone – in darkness – and in knowledge of our own mortality.

All: We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light – the light itself has not failed. We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark – with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come – and dawn defeats the darkness.

Play and sing the third verse of O Come, O Come Emmanuel

A period of silent reflection...

Light the last purple candle.

One: We light this forth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and Christmas, which both began with abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable. We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

All: We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light – and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.

Play and sing forth verse of O Come, O Come Emmanuel

A period of silent reflection...

Prayers of the People

One: God of wisdom, we come to you this Christmas season tired, in turmoil, and in pain. As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness

grown and wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of longest night, we ask your healing blessings upon all that we carry in our hearts – sorrow we fear may never end, wounds we cannot even put into words. Lord – hear our prayer.

All: And in your merciful love, answer.

One: God of mercy and compassion, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of Christmas. We remember that once it was a special day for us, too – but someone or something precious has gone away from us in this life. We have lost a beloved – a job – a goal – a cause – a dream. We find ourselves adrift and alone. We are weary from the journey – and we have found no room at the inn. We come to you this night – seeking rest, and peace, and shelter from the storm. Lord hear our prayer.

All: And in your merciful love, answer.

One: God of grace, in the spirit of the season, grant us all that we need to comfort us as we journey through this Christmas season. We ask that you shelter and sustain all of those of us – both here and throughout the world – who wander or want to weep or are heavy laden – that we may be lifted up in courage and journey on in Thy peace. Lord – hear our prayer...

All: And in your merciful love, answer.

One: God of love, in this Christmas season – we embrace and offer up to you all that used to be which is now lost to us – and cannot be again. With celebration all around us, memories of what was – and fears of what may be – weigh heavy on our hearts. Please – hold us close in your embrace – be near to us this night – until the light returns – and morning comes. Lord – hear our prayer

All: And in your merciful love, answer.

One: Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night – and give thine angels charge over those who sleep. Tend to the sick, Lord; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for thy love’s sake. Amen.

Song – Do You Hear What I Hear?

Scripture Reading

Luke 2:1-14

2 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³ So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

⁴ Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. ⁶ So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. ⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸ Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be the

sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

***¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”***

Psalm 121

Assurance of God’s Protection

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?***
- ² My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.***
- ³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.***
- ⁴ He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.***
- ⁵ The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.***
- ⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.***
- ⁷ The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.***
- ⁸ The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.***

One: Let us pray. Almighty God, we thank you for your constant love and for the blessings of this day. We know that even when we cannot

see or feel you – still – you are there. Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice in the words of family, friends, and strangers. Kindle our hearts and awaken hope – that we may know you as you reveal yourself in the world and in our lives

Let the light of your Holy Spirit shine like these candles in the darkness – lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost, or forgotten, and grant that it may come to dwell so deeply in our hearts that when we depart from this service it may shine on – for us – and for those we meet along the way. Amen.

Song – Silent Night

Prayer

Let us pray. Another day will come, O God. We know not what it may bring forth, but make us ready, God, for whatever it may be. If we are to stand up, help us to stand bravely. If we are to sit still, help us to sit quietly. If we are to lie low, help us to do it patiently. And if we are to do nothing, help us to do it gallantly. Make these words more than words; and give us the Spirit of thy Peace.

O God, support us all the day long in this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then Lord, in your mercy, grant us safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

Closing Song – Hope Was Born This Night

Thank You!

Blessing and Benediction – and Advent Prayer and Blessing