

Salem-Sauk Valley Lutheran Parish
Order of Sunday Worship- Fourth Sunday in Advent– December 22nd, 2024
At Salem Lutheran Church

Prelude
Welcome/Announcements

Emily Larson, Musician

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Invocation:

P: We gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **C: Amen.**

Opening Prayer:

P: O Lord, our Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter, we are assembled in Your presence to hear Your holy Word. We pray that You would open our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that through the preaching of Your Word we may be taught to repent of our sins, to believe on Jesus in life and in death, and grow day by day in grace and holiness. Hear us for Christ's sake. **C: Amen.**

Opening Hymn:

“O Holy Night”

Praise #183

Confession of Sin:

P: Let us bow before the Lord and confess our sins.

C: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Therefore, we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Kyrie:

C: O God the Father in heaven, have mercy upon us!

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us!

O God the Holy Spirit, true Comforter, have mercy upon us!

Absolution:

P: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us, and has given his only Son to die for us, and for his sake God forgives all our sins. To those who believe in his name he gives power to become the children of God, and has promised them his Holy Spirit. Those who believe and are baptized shall be saved. Grant this Lord unto us all.

C: Amen.

Gloria:

P: Glory be to God in the highest.

C: And on earth peace, good will toward men.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day:

P: Let us pray together.

C: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Psalmody- Luke 1:46b-55
First Reading- Micah 5:2-5a
Second Reading- Hebrews 10:5-10

Hymn

“Magnificat”

Insert

Gospel Reading- Luke 1:39-56 [46-55]

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: God be praised for his glad tidings!

Apostles Creed

C: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Children’s Message – “Jesus Loves Me”

Choir Singing

Offering and Offertory: *We give Thee but Thine own, whate’er the gift might be. All that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord from Thee.*

Hymn:

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

Praise #192

Sermon

Pastor Lexy Carson

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ,

Right before our Gospel passage today was the annunciation in scripture, where the Angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her she was to bear a child, the savior.

And the next thing we hear in scripture is that she goes with haste to Elizabeth and Zechariah’s house. There’s not much in scripture that tells us about Mary’s life prior to this point, it’s assumed she was living at her parents home in Nazareth but she doesn’t stay there long once she’s with child.

But she goes in haste, flees from her home, from her engagement to Joseph and seeks refuge at Zechariah and Elizabeth’s which was 100 miles from Nazareth and mostly uphill as well.

And were left to speculate as to why but I think Mary sought refuge with someone who would understand, and Elizabeth was that person for her.

Elizabeth was not the most respected or of power and privilege in her community. She was advanced in years, likely between the age of 50-80 and she had failed to produce a child. Her and

Zechariah had desperately longed for an heir but it seemed that door had closed in their lives. Their age made it clear it was too late but God said nope. Even at your age, you will have a child and he will be my messenger, the forerunner, John who will prepare the way for Jesus. Elizabeth by all logical means shouldn't have been pregnant. It was too late, the time of childbearing was long gone and yet she was pregnant.

And Mary was on the opposite side of the spectrum, instead of being too old she was too young, not married and a virgin. These two women with decades in between them that seem like such very different narratives collide in their pregnancies, united in God's creative and outside of logical power.

Two children, two sons, that would change the world born into situations that seemed anything else than conventional and orthodox.

As Mary goes in haste to find Elizabeth, someone who would understand, someone who wouldn't accuse or doubt her but someone who was in her shoes and full heartedly knew the possibility of God's mercy.

I think that's why Mary's song, her Magnificat lands right after her greeting to Elizabeth, because her soul was filled with such rest and comfort.

Where back in Nazareth she likely felt the weight of accusation for a pregnancy out of wedlock, the weight being too young but here she wasn't greeted with guilt and fear but surrounded by mercy and joy, Elizabeth doesn't say how could this be, how could you have done this. No she says blessed are you among women, why am I so favored that the mother of the lord comes to me?

Elizabeth knew because her story felt so close to Mary's, these two women who had no right carrying children who were the lowly ones of their communities and God sought them and gave them hope when they were without it.

My soul glorifies the Lord, for he is mindful of the humble state of his servant. He scatters the rulers, brought rulers down from their thrones, sends the rich away empty, he has remembered Israel with mercy. Mary's Magnificat encompasses God bringing hope to the hopeless, mercy to the sinner, and filling the turmoil with rest. This is Mary's confession of faith, knowing God found her in her lowliness and gave her mercy that would be given to her in her own child.

And this beautiful song, pouring out of faith in Mary's Magnificat is exactly what Christ will do throughout his ministry. His mission never strays or changes, what God is up to Jesus is up to. Feeding the hungry? The feeding of the five thousand.

Even John, in the womb leaps at the presence of Christ, his Savior.

So what do you have in common with a 60 year old pregnant woman, a 15 year old pregnant girl, or two children in the womb? Well, I'm guessing at some point in your life you may not have been the most adored person in a community, possibly not a situation that everyone approved up, or maybe you've been left longing for something to be the way you wanted.

And the promise Elizabeth, John and Mary all received is the same word God has for you. You are blessed, you are favored. It may not always look like it or feel like it right now but in every circumstance God is for you and blessing you. Just as it didn't feel that way for decades and decades as Elizabeth waited for her child or as Mary dreaded having to tell Joseph she was with child. But God provides, in the face of our fears and doubts, he says I've got a word for this - mercy and forgiveness greater than any obstacle life throws your way.

Hymn:

"Thy Little Ones Dear Lord Are We"

Concordia #366

Prayer of the Church: Each prayer will end: Lord, in your mercy. **C: Hear our prayer.**

Holy Communion

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts to the Lord.

C: We lift up our hearts unto the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is meet and right so to do. P: It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give praise to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, whom John the baptizer heralded as the anointed One, the very Lamb of God, calling all sinners to repent to escape the judgment of his coming. Therefore, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Your glorious name; evermore praising you and singing:

C: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Invitation/Distribution

Thanksgiving-

P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

P: Let us give thanks and pray: We thank you Lord God almighty that you have refreshed us with these gifts; and we ask you, in your mercy, to strengthen us through these same gifts in faith toward you and in fervent love for one another; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

C: Amen.

Benediction

P: Now may the Lord bless us and keep us. May the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. May the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us and give us his peace.

C: Amen, Amen, Amen.

Doxology

C: Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him all creatures here below. Praise him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Dismissal: P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God!**

Postlude

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