

Third Sunday of Advent

December 12th 2021

Welcome & Announcements

Prelude

Introit

Creator of the Stars of Night

Gathering Around the Word

Call to Worship

One: A voice calls out in the wilderness.

All: It sings of a home for all.

It speaks of justice and peace.

One: Dare we choose to ignore it?

All: We could drown out that song.

We could choose not to listen.

One: Instead, we come into this space.

All: We let the world grow quiet. We listen.

One: A voice calls out in the wilderness. Do you hear it?

All: We hear it. In listening, we worship.

One: Let us draw near to God.

Lighting the Advent Candles--

Hymn 756

O God of Every Nation (all) LLANGLOFFAN

Call to Confession

It takes courage to tell the truth. John the Baptist knew this, as he called the people to repent. You and I know it, too. So as we turn to the one who is both judge and savior, may we channel John the Baptist's courage to tell the truth about ourselves and our world, trusting that repentance opens the door to new life. Let us be brave and bold, speaking the truth out loud because we know that we cannot grow and change without first being honest. Let us confess together now to the God who could not possibly love us any more.

Prayer of Confession (in unison)

God of All People,

We know that the Church is your house,

and your house has room for everyone.

Yet instead of setting the table for our neighbors,

we often block the door.

Instead of welcoming all,

**we judge others by human standards.
Instead of sharing our second coat,
we hide it in the attic.
Instead of letting go with love,
we hold on to fear.
Remind us that your home is a home for *all*,
a truth that requires hard work and uncomfortable justice.
Help us to be bold enough to see it
and brave enough to live it.
With hope in Christ we pray, Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Beloved of God, the work of Christ's Kingdom is not easy. Helping to create a world where all might have a home, all might be loved, and all might know peace is a bold and challenging task. Fortunately for us, when we lose our way or forget our call, we are met with profound grace. God could not love us any more—or any less!—than God already does. May you find peace and assurance in this Good News:

All: By the grace of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, claimed, and loved! Thanks be to God!

Passing the Peace

Response

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen, amen.*

Listening to the Word

Prayer for Illumination of God's Word

God of Peace, you are our sustenance, our guide, and our ultimate assurance. By your Holy Spirit open us to your promises and commands, and fill our hearts with the power of your love, that we might know your desires for us. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, **Amen.**

First Reading Zephaniah 3:14-20

¹⁴ Rejoice, Daughter Zion! Shout, Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem.

¹⁵ The LORD has removed your judgment;
he has turned away your enemy.
The LORD, the king of Israel, is in your midst;
you will no longer fear evil.

¹⁶ On that day, it will be said to Jerusalem:
Don't fear, Zion.

- Don't let your hands fall.
- ¹⁷ The LORD your God is in your midst—a warrior bringing victory.
He will create calm with his love;
he will rejoice over you with singing.
- ¹⁸ I will remove from you those worried about the appointed feasts.
They have been a burden for her, a reproach.
- ¹⁹ Watch what I am about to do to all your oppressors at that time.
I will deliver the lame;
I will gather the outcast.
I will change their shame into praise and fame throughout the earth.
- ²⁰ At that time, I will bring all of you back,
at the time when I gather you.
I will give you fame and praise among all the neighboring peoples
when I restore your possessions and you can see them—says the LORD.

Sharing Faith with the Younger Church

Anthem---none

Second Reading Luke 3:3-16

³ John went throughout the region of the Jordan River, calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. ⁴ This is just as it was written in the scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

A voice crying out in the wilderness:

*“Prepare the way for the Lord;
make his paths straight.*

⁵ *Every valley will be filled,
and every mountain and hill will be leveled.*

*The crooked will be made straight
and the rough places made smooth.*

⁶ *All humanity will see God's salvation.”*

⁷ Then John said to the crowds who came to be baptized by him, “You children of snakes! Who warned you to escape from the angry judgment that is coming soon? ⁸ Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives. And don't even think about saying to yourselves, Abraham is our father. I tell you that God is able to raise up Abraham's children from these stones. ⁹ The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be chopped down and tossed into the fire.”

¹⁰ The crowds asked him, “What then should we do?”

¹¹ He answered, “Whoever has two shirts must share with the one who has none, and whoever has food must do the same.”

¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized. They said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?”

¹³ He replied, “Collect no more than you are authorized to collect.”

¹⁴ Soldiers asked, “What about us? What should we do?”

He answered, “Don’t cheat or harass anyone, and be satisfied with your pay.”

¹⁵ The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ. ¹⁶ John replied to them all, “I baptize you with water, but the one who is more powerful than me is coming. I’m not worthy to loosen the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Sermon

Responding to the Word

***Hymn 96** *On Jordon's Bank the Baptist's Cry (all)* WINCHESTER NEW LM

Affirmation of Faith Apostles’ Creed

Sharing our Prayers

The Lord’s Prayer

***Hymn 144** *In the Bleak Midwinter (all)* CRANHAM

Giving Back to God’s Kingdom

With gratitude for God’s many gifts, may our tithes, offerings, and labor bring caring to a world hungry for healing and hope, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

The Doxology

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

Charge & Benediction

Blessing

Hymn 92 *While We Are Waiting, Come (vrs.1)* WAITING (Cason) SM

Postlude