

# PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

First Presbyterian Church, McAllen

December 5, 2021

Second Sunday of Advent

*Prepare the way of the Lord!  
All flesh shall see the salvation of God.*

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## Opening Sentences

- A messenger from God is coming. A new day of mercy is dawning. A voice is crying in the wilderness:
- Prepare the way of the Lord!

## Prelude

### Call to Worship: An Advent Candle Litany

A voice cries out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord.”

A choir sings in the silence,

“Come, Emmanuel.”

Every valley shall be filled.

Every heart shall be made whole,  
for peace is stronger than turmoil,  
and love is louder than hate.

As we light our second Advent candle,

**we pray for the holy peace of God.**

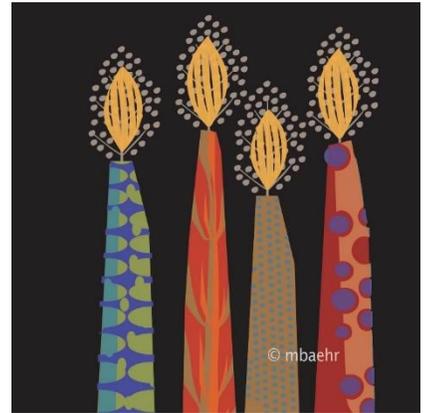
Come now, O Child of Mary.

**Come now, O Prince of Peace.**

Choral Response    *Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah*

Prayer of the Day

God our Savior -- your word shakes the wilderness,  
washes away evil,  
and causes all flesh to rejoice.  
Make us ready to greet you  
at the coming of your holy realm;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Hymn

*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

GG #366

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,  
fix in us thy humble dwelling;  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, thou art all compassion;  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation;  
enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit  
into every troubled breast;  
let us all in thee inherit;  
let us find the promised rest.  
Take away the love of sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be;  
end of faith, as its beginning,  
set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty, to deliver;  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
never more thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation;  
pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in thee:  
changed from glory into glory,  
till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Choral Call to Confession

*O Lord, Hear My Prayer, line 1*

Call to Confession

In Jesus Christ  
God seeks to smooth the places that have been made rough by sin.  
With humility and hope, let us make our confession.

Prayer of Confession

**Cleansing God, we hear the call to repentance,  
but we struggle to respond.  
A voice tells us to turn around,  
but we prefer our own ways.**

You seek to purify us in love,  
but we constantly elude your searching hand.  
Our sin -- both personal and structural --  
leads us in other directions  
away from you, away from life.  
Look with mercy upon us.  
Clear a place within us;  
inspire greater love among us  
so that something new might be born,  
something that might return us --  
each of your children and all of creation --  
to the way you have shown us in Jesus Christ.

*A moment of silent prayer.*

Choral Response

*O Lord, Hear My Prayer, line 2*

Declaration of Forgiveness

By the tender mercy of our God,  
the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
to give light to those who sit in darkness  
and in the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

This is the good news of the Gospel:

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, healed, and made whole.**

**Thanks be to God!**

Gloria Patri

Passing the Peace of Christ

The peace of our Lord be with you all. / **And also with you.**

Prayer for Illumination

Holy One, through your Holy Spirit  
instruct us by the light of your prophets.  
Illumine our hearts, that we may hear your call  
to become your path into the world.  
In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

## Epistle Reading

Philippians 1:3-11

I thank my God every time I remember you, <sup>4</sup>constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, <sup>5</sup>because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup>I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup>For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup>And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight <sup>10</sup>to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, <sup>11</sup>having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

## Anthem

### Gospel Reading

Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, <sup>2</sup>during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, <sup>4</sup>as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.

<sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;

<sup>6</sup> and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' '

**The Word of the Lord / Thanks be to God.**



Franz Pourbus the Elder  
*Sermon of St. John the Baptist*

## Sermon

### Affirmation of Faith

from The Confession of 1967

**The one sufficient revelation of God  
is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate,  
to whom the Holy Spirit  
bears unique and authoritative witness  
through the Holy Scriptures,  
which are received and obeyed  
as the word of God written. (9.27)**

### Hymn

#### *Let Us Break Bread Together*

GG #525

Let us break bread together on our knees;  
let us break bread together on our knees.  
When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,  
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us drink wine together on our knees;  
let us drink wine together on our knees.  
When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,  
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us praise God together on our knees;  
let us praise God together on our knees.  
When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,  
O Lord, have mercy on me.



### Presentation of Tithes and Offering

#### Invitation to the Offering

We are called by God to present a harvest of righteousness --  
not by virtue of our own works,  
but by the grace of the one who began a good work in us,  
and is even now bringing it to completion.

Let us bring the offerings of our lives to the Lord.

#### Offertory / Doxology

##### Offertory Prayer

God of all righteousness, we pray  
that the gifts we offer of time, talent, and treasure  
might glorify you and be used to do the work of your kingdom.  
Amen.

## The Sacrament of Communion

### Invitation to the Table

A great feast is prepared for us --  
the harvest of righteousness  
that comes through Jesus Christ.  
God's grace overflows for us --  
the cup of promise and blessing  
that we share in Christ the Lord.

Come to the table where all are welcome.  
Come to the feast where all are fed.

### Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you / **And also with you.**  
Lift up your hearts. / **We lift them to the Lord.**  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. /  
**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is truly right and our greatest joy  
to give you thanks and praise,  
O Lord our God, creator and ruler of the universe.

You formed us in your image  
and set us in this world to love and serve you.  
When we were captives in slavery,  
you delivered us to freedom,  
and made covenant to be our sovereign God.  
When we were stubborn and stiff-necked,  
you spoke to us through prophets  
who looked for that day  
when justice shall triumph  
and peace shall reign over all the earth.

Therefore we praise you,  
joining our voices with the celestial choirs  
and with all the faithful of every time and place,  
who forever proclaim the glory of your name:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord  
God of power and might.  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest!**

You are holy, O God of majesty,  
and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son.  
You sent him into this world  
to bring freedom to the captives of sin,  
and to establish justice for the oppressed.  
He came among us as one of us,  
taking the lot of the poor,  
sharing human suffering,  
dying an unjust death.

We rejoice that in his dying and rising again,  
you set before us the sure promise of new life,  
the certain hope of a heavenly home  
where we will sit at table with Christ our host.

Remembering your gracious acts in Jesus Christ,  
we take from your creation this bread and this cup  
and joyfully celebrate his dying and rising,  
as we await the day of his coming.  
With thanksgiving we offer our very selves to you  
to be a living and holy sacrifice,  
dedicated to your service.

Great is the mystery of faith:  
**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Gracious God,  
pour out your Holy Spirit upon us  
and upon these your gifts of bread and cup,  
that the bread we break  
and the cup we bless  
may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ,  
that we may be one with all who share this feast,  
united in ministry in every place.  
As this bread is Christ's body for us,  
send us out to be the body of Christ in the world.

Strengthen us, O God, in the power of your Spirit  
to bring good news to the poor  
and loose the chains that bind.  
Keep us faithful in your service  
until Christ comes in final victory,  
and we shall feast with all your saints  
in the joy of your eternal realm.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory and honor are yours, almighty God,  
now and forever. **Amen.**

Let us pray as Christ has taught us, saying:  
**Our Father, who art in heaven ...**

### Sharing Bread and Cup

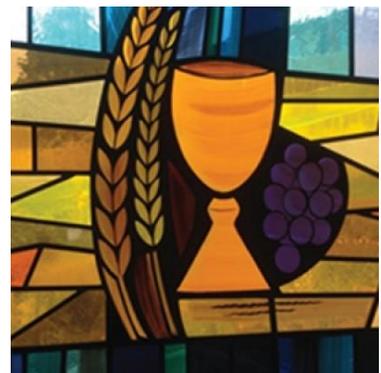
The gifts of God for the people of God.  
Whenever we eat this bread and share this cup,  
we celebrate Christ's death and resurrection  
until he comes again.

The body of Christ, the bread of heaven.  
Let us eat.  
The cup of the new covenant sealed in Christ.  
Let us drink.

### The Sacrament Extends Beyond the Sanctuary

We send you out with this bread and cup  
to share the feast of the risen Lord.

**We who are many are one body,  
for we all partake of the one bread.**



## Prayer after Communion

Gracious and abundant God,  
even as we wait for the fulfillment of your creation,  
you meet us in Christ at this table, in this meal.  
We thank you for feeding us with the bread of life  
and quenching our thirst in the cup of salvation.  
Now send us out into the world by the power of your Holy Spirit  
to share your life and salvation with all whom we meet. Amen.

## Hymn

### *On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry*

GG #96

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
announces that the Lord is nigh;  
awake and hearken, for he brings  
glad tidings of the King of kings!

We hail you as our Savior, Lord,  
our refuge and our great reward;  
without your grace we waste away  
like flowers that wither and decay.

Then cleansed be every life from sin;  
make straight the way for God within,  
and let us all our hearts prepare  
for Christ to come and enter there.

Stretch forth your hand; our health restore,  
and make us rise to fall no more.  
O let your face upon us shine  
and fill the world with love divine.

## The Life of the Church

## Charge and Benediction

## Congregational Response

### *While We Are Waiting, Come, v. 1*

GG #92

While we are waiting, come;  
while we are waiting, come.  
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel,  
while we are waiting, come.

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### **Today's Worship Leaders:**

Rev. Kathryn J. Escandell  
Beverly Avila

Chris Leonard  
Robert Garza

Jan and Spud Brown  
Ale Pacheco

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