



GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Second Sunday of Advent and Communion
December 6, 2020

Today is Communion Sunday. If you did not pick up communion supplies at the church you might want to prepare some juice and bread to partake during the service.

Morning Meditation

Franklin D. Roosevelt, 20th century

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

The Call

Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

Welcome and News of the Church

Statement of Welcome

**No matter who I am, No matter where I am on life's journey, I am welcome here.
No matter who you are, no matter where you are on life's journey, You are welcome here!**

Statement of Purpose

One: Who are you?	All: I am a beloved child of God!
One: What does that mean?	All: I am a person of worth to be valued!
One: Then what will you do?	All: I will live a life of Love and Acceptance of myself and all God's people!

Prelude

Sandy Wentzloff

Light the Second Candle of Advent:

Reader: O Holy One, we light this second candle, A candle offering comfort to weary spirits after a year of pain and loss.

People: Let its glow remind us of your tender care, and warm our lives in the Light of Peace.

Reader: Let it guide us to your presence in our midst, leading us to your Justice and Joy in the service of Love.

People: God be with us in this Light of Peace.

Lighting the candles of Hope and Peace

Choral Response

"Christ Be Our Light"

**Refrain: Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts, Shine through the darkness
Christ be our light! Shine in your Church gathered today.**

Verse: Longing for light, we wait in darkness. Longing for truth we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people, light for the world to see.

Refrain: Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts, Shine through the darkness

Christ be our light! Shine in your Church gathered today.

Verse: Longing for peace, our world is troubled. Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us. Make us your living voice.

Refrain: **Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts, Shine through the darkness**
Christ be our light! Shine in your Church gathered today.

Call to Worship

Reader: Let us hear what God will speak, Tender words for a burdened people:

People: Comfort, comfort, my people! The days of sorrow are ending!

Reader: Let us hear what God will speak, Encouraging words for an anxious people:

People: Prepare a way for the Holy One, through deserts of despair
build a highway for our God!

Reader: Let us hear what God will speak, words of vision for a weary people:

People: Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss!

Reader: Come, let us worship!

Invocation

O Holy One, you are the tender shepherd, architect of the Way,
beguiling hope of all who go looking for you deep in their lives.
Surprise us here with sweetness, challenge, vision—whatever we may need
in this moment to recognize you and follow you into the future.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Beloved.

Gloria

Glory be to Creator, and to the Christ and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be
World without end, Amen. Amen.

Lectionary Text

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' "

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Sermon

"Surprise Me, God"

There was a young woman who lived in an apartment in a very rough neighborhood. Many of the people who lived in this neighborhood got by on welfare, others earned their living any way they could. The young woman moved into the apartment because it was close to the office where she worked, the rent was cheap and quite frankly she was young and foolish. She ignored all the warnings of her family and friends and moved into the apartment convinced that she could handle anything that came her way. On her way to her office each morning she would meet some of her neighbors returning home from an evening of plying their trade on the streets and in the alleys. Each morning, she would be met at the entrance to her office by an old man named Ed.

Ed had been living on the streets for years. He was very hairy, very dirty, and he tended to rant and rave a lot. Ed was a wild man. He slept on the doorstep of the young woman's office because it was somewhat protected from the winter weather. Even though Ed made the young woman nervous, she got used to seeing him on her way.

Ed always gave the young woman a warm welcome when she arrived. He knew that when she got inside, she would brew fresh coffee. He used to tease her that she was a sucker for a sad face as he waited patiently for her to bring him a cup of coffee. They never talked much, though. Ed would just rant and rave about the injustices of the world. The young woman never found out how Ed ended up on the streets. She didn't know how he spent his days.

As Christmas approached, the young woman became very busy with her preparations for the holiday. This was the first year that she had more money than she needed and she decided to celebrate. So she decorated her apartment, bought all sorts of gifts and spent hours wrapping each one.

This year she wasn't going to be rushed. She wasn't going to miss out on anything. Christmas wasn't going to come and go without finding her in the Christmas spirit.

The young woman had drawn the short straw and had to work on Christmas Eve. So, before she left her apartment, she packed a small package of goodies for Ed. She was delighted that she was so well prepared that she could take time for others. But when she got to the office, Ed was nowhere in sight. She asked some of the women who worked the streets if they had seen old Ed. But no one knew where he was.

The young woman went about her duties and soon forgot all about Ed. She finished her work early and went off to celebrate Christmas Eve with her friends. She had been looking forward to Christmas for weeks and was eager to celebrate. Together, she and her friends shared a fine Christmas dinner with all the trimmings and then they went out to a candle light service. The service was beautiful. They really pulled out all the stops, great music, lots of activity. The preacher even managed to keep his sermon brief. But somehow the young woman was left feeling like there was something missing.

The next morning, she celebrated with her family. Her nieces eagerly unpacked dozens of presents and the whole the family managed to keep their disagreements down to the minimum that year. But the young woman felt detached, like she was just going through the motions. Despite all the elaborate trimmings, she felt like she missed out on her fair share of the Christmas spirit.

As she drove back to her apartment in the city, she found herself wondering if this was all there was to it. Christmas had come and gone and she didn't feel like anything had changed at all. By the time she had parked her car, she was feeling quite depressed. Christmas was over and nothing much had changed.

When she got to the entrance of her apartment, she saw Ed. She had never seen him anywhere near her apartment before and it made her more than a little nervous. She wondered how he had found out where she lived. Indeed, it frightened her that Ed had taken the trouble to find her apartment. Ed looked very agitated.

Nervous, the young woman greeted Ed and asked him why he was at her doorstep. Ed explained to her that he needed her help. The young woman became very uneasy. The odd cup of coffee at work

was one thing, but this old man showing up on her door step was quite another. And now he wanted something. Ed asked the young woman if she would come with him to the park. Caught off guard, the young woman reluctantly agreed. When they arrived in the park, Ed introduced the young woman to Karen.

Karen was a very scared looking teenager. She couldn't have been more than about fourteen years old. Ed explained to the young woman that Karen had run away from home on Christmas Eve. He said that lots of kids ended up on the streets at this time of year and there were usually lots of unsavory characters to meet them when they arrived. When Karen arrived at the city bus depot, Ed had spotted her. From the moment she arrived, Ed had carefully watched over Karen, making sure that she came to no harm in the city. Karen's two days on the streets and Ed's gentle persuasion had convinced her that she should really go back home and try to work things out with her parents. Ed explained to the young woman that Karen needed money for a bus ticket home.

After they had called Karen's parents and safely loaded her onto a bus, the young woman asked Ed if he would come and share a meal with her. Ed refused the offer of a meal but agreed to share a cup of coffee with the young woman.

In the coffee shop, the young woman took a long hard look at old Ed. That night in the coffee shop, she looked into the eyes of a wild man. She didn't know it then, but later she realized that it was Ed, in his own way, who had helped her prepare the way for Christ. Ed was a modern-day prophet—who, like old John the Baptist—pointed the way to Christ. She had almost missed it. Christ had come. But the young woman had been so busy looking up that she had forgotten to look around her.

Christ came to the young woman in Karen. "Truly I tell you," said Jesus, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Beloved people of God, Christ continues to come to us in the most unlikely of places, wearing the most unlikely of faces, and often in the most unlikely of circumstances. And we don't want to miss Christ, do we?

So here's a little journey that I would invite you to take these Advent days. . .when you wake up these Advent mornings, pray a simple prayer; "Surprise me, God! "Surprise me, God." Begin your day with these three words; "Surprise me God." Then watch and be open to see where Christ may show up to you that day. You may need to watch carefully, because Christ often shows up in the most unexpected places. And then at the end of each day, just take a moment to reflect back on your day. Where did Christ show up? As Christ came as Karen to the young woman, perhaps was Christ present to you in someone that day? And as Ed, who might have appeared like the most unlikely character that God would work through, actually pointed the young woman to Christ. Who are the people in your life who are pointing you to Christ? Who may have a word of the Lord for you? It's surprising who God may be working through to touch your life.

And so just a three-word prayer, "Surprise me God." And as you pray this, please know that we have a God who likes to surprise people. God has a track record in bringing surprises: Adam woke up one day and there was Eve. Abraham's wife Sara had a child at the age of 90. Don't you think he was surprised? Mary the mother of our Lord, certainly was surprised. And so, with this simple three-word prayer, I invite us all to grow during these Advent days in our awareness of God's presence in our lives.

Let us pray: Surprise me, God! Surprise us, God. Help us to be open and watching for you as you come to us, maybe in the most unlikely people and most unlikely ways. In your name we pray. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses and we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For you are the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Call to Offering

In struggle and in joy, God is faithful to us.

We bring forth our offerings – our tithes, our treasures, our least coins – to demonstrate our faithfulness to God.

Dedication

People: O Faithful One, accept these gifts of our hearts and hands. May they be multiplied and magnified as the living presence of Christ in the world. Amen.



Holy Communion

Communion Hymn

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

NCH #116

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Child of God appear.

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

O come, O Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show, and help us in that way to go. **Refrain**

O come, Desire of Nations, bind all people in one heart and mind;
Make envy, strife, and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace. **Refrain**

One: God be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to God.

One: Give thanks to God.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

CONFESSING OUR HUMANNESS

The year past has been riddled with crisis and losses:

Covid-19, natural disasters of fire and hurricane,
exposure of societal injustices rooted in racist and sexist structures,
painful political reckonings.

In this moment we are called to examine our hearts for our role in the last year:
to name what traditionally have been called

Sins of Commission—that is, what we may have done
to contribute to the pain and chaos of these days;

Sins of Omission—that is, what we may have left undone
which contributed to the pain, or failed to help alleviate suffering.

Assurance of Grace

Comfort, comfort, my people, says the God of Justice and Compassion.
You are forgiven your sin, and showered with grace to change your life,
And to work toward the kin-dom of the One who is to Come:
New heavens and new earth, where righteousness is at home.
Amen.

Response **Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.** (Rev. 7: 12b)

Doxology **Praise God from whom new light doth shine**
 Praise God who turns water to wine
 Praise God who brings the bread from grain
 Praise God until Christ comes again. Amen.

Prayer of Consecration

One: Holy God, descend your Spirit upon these gifts of grain and grape,
whether on this table or in the homes of your people,
that they might be for us the presence of the living Christ.
Pour out your Spirit upon us so that we might be reflections of your likeness
in a hurting world so that others might know the blessings
of living in communion with you and one another.
Through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor are yours Almighty God, now and forever.
All: Amen.

Words of Institution and Distribution

Thanksgiving

One: Let us pray.

All: Thank you most Holy God, for meeting us in this simple meal.
May your presence within us ripple beyond us, ever expanding,
until the day when you gather all your saints from the four winds
to share in your eternal banquet. In all our words and actions may
your name be praised now and forever more. Amen.

Communion Hymn

“O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL”

O come, O Day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by your advent here;
Love stir with-in the womb of night, and death’s own shadows put to flight.

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

Benediction

Go forth into the world energized to seek signs of God’s future everywhere:
especially in the unruly, unkempt, and persistent voices of Prophets
in our midst: calling us to prepare the way in our lives and our world
For the Holy One who is coming! **Amen.**

Closing Song:

“Spirit Song”

O let the Son of God enfold you with his Spirit and his love
Let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul,
O let him have the things that hold you, and his Spirit like a dove
will descend upon your life and make you whole.

Refrain:

Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs
Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs

Postlude

Sandy Wentzloff

Remember in Prayer: Jim Peterson, Bill Walsh, Greg Armstrong (Howard’s brother), Dick Carlson, Ann Pinske (Ted’s sister-in-law), Ewald Keller, Bill Cowell, Eunice Gasow, and Aggie Schue. We pray for health and healing for all people. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders.

Our sympathy and prayers go to Diane and Darrel Mosel on the passing of Diane’s brother David.

If you have a prayer request or would like to receive a call from Pastor Dennis call his office at 237-2595 (leave a private voice mail) or his cell 763-258-3371

Pastor Dennis is usually in the office each Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. He can be reached at the office, 237-2595 (private voice mail) or his cell: 763-258-3371. E-mail: dmckee545@gmail.com • Website at listen2god.org

Please remember how important your financial support of the ministry of Gaylord United Church of Christ is, especially in this time.

We pray for wisdom of leaders, the support of us all in doing what we can to suppress the spread of corona virus, and the safety of all our friends, families, and people of the world. *God is Good, all the time.*

Tithes, Offerings and Pledges can be sent to Gaylord United Church of Christ P.O. Box 385 Gaylord, MN 55334. You can also donate on our website or drop off at the church office on Wednesday between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

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- ❖ Our **From the Heart Offering** in **December** goes to **Christmas Fund**.
 - ❖ **Women’s Fellowship is selling dish cloths**. Cost is \$1.00 each.
 - ❖ **Mission Board is sponsoring “Coats for Kids”** Bring your donations of gently used or new winter wear to church until the **end of the year**.
 - ❖ **Mission Board** is also collecting donations of new toys, games, hats and mittens, quilts, wrapping paper and monetary donations for ***Santa’s Helpers***. These items can be brought to church and placed by the Mitten Tree thru December 6th.

******Drop off your donations at church inside the back door on Wednesdays between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Thank You.***

