

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church  
229 South Broad Street  
Jersey Shore, PA 17740  
570-398-1676

Sunday, December 17, 2023  
3rd Sunday of Advent



### **Introduction to the day**

*“Rejoice always,” begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. “All God’s children got a robe,” go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.*

### **CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM**

*Away in the Manager p.277 verses 2 and 3*

### **SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS**

#### **Prelude**

#### **GATHERING**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

#### **LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH**

**The Advent Wreath.** *One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting in the midst of growing darkness strengthen some of the Advent images found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of greens is clearly an image of everlasting life, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent and the growth of light. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its evergreen branches lead the household and the congregation to the evergreen Christmas tree. In many homes, the family gathers for prayers around the wreath.*

#### **Third Week of Advent**

Praise to you, O God, who holds our joy and sorrow,  
You bring water to parched ground and life out of death.  
Bless us as this light grows.  
And send sorrow and sighing to flee away.  
Give us strength and patience.  
Trusting that you are true to your promises.  
Transform the lives of all who suffer  
With your wonders near at hand. **AMEN.**

#### **Light One candle to Watch for Messiah 240 verse 3**

*Light three candles to watch for Messiah:  
Let the light banish darkness.  
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway*

*For the King of glory.*

## **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

*The assembly stands.*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
who opens the heavens  
and draws near to us with salvation.

**Amen.**

God is patient and merciful, desiring all to come to repentance.  
Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Everlasting God,  
**you love justice and you hate wrongdoing.**  
**We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness**  
**that make us reluctant to work against oppression.**  
**We are complicit in systems of exploitation.**  
**We choose comfort over courage.**  
**We are careless with creation's bounty.**  
**Look upon us with mercy.**  
**Turn our hearts again to you.**  
**Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways**  
**for the sake of our waiting world. Amen.**

Hear these words of assurance:

God clothes you with garments of salvation  
and covers you with robes of righteousness.

In the tender compassion of † Jesus Christ,  
your sins are forgiven.

God's covenant is eternal,  
and God's blessing rests upon us all.

**Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG: *People Look East* 248**

## **GREETING**

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **And also, with you.**

**KYRIE setting 10 p. 203**

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

*The assembly is seated.*

## WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

L: A reading from Isaiah.

### **FIRST READING:** Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

*Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.*

- <sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
<sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
<sup>3</sup>to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.  
<sup>4</sup>They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.
- <sup>8</sup>For I the LORD love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.  
<sup>9</sup>Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.  
<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

L: The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

Let us read responsively by verse the Psalm.

**Psalm 126**

<sup>1</sup>When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
then were we like those who dream.

<sup>2</sup>**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.  
Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."**

<sup>3</sup>The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we are glad indeed.

<sup>4</sup>**Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses of the Negeb.**

<sup>5</sup>Those who sowed with tears  
will reap with songs of joy.

<sup>6</sup>**Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,  
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.**

L: A reading from First Thessalonians

**Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

*Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.*

<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise the words of prophets, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil.

<sup>23</sup>May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

L: The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*The assembly stands.*

**Gospel Acclamation p.205**

*Alleluia! Lord and Savior; open now your saving word.*

*Let it burn like fire within us; speak until our hearts are stirred.*

*Alleluia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.*

P: The holy gospel according to St. John

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

**GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28**

*John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.*

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

<sup>19</sup>This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” <sup>20</sup>He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” <sup>21</sup>And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” <sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” <sup>23</sup>He said,

“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,  
‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ ”

as the prophet Isaiah said.

<sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” <sup>26</sup>John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup>the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” <sup>28</sup>This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

P: The gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

*The assembly is seated.*

## **SERMON**

*The assembly stands.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY: *Hark! The Glad Sound!* 239**

**THE NICENE CREED p. 104 in the front of the hymnal**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

A: With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God’s day of restoration.

*A brief silence.*

Fill our mouths with laughter and our tongues with shouts of joy as we bear witness to the great things you have done. Give your church a spirit of gladness as we gather and as we are sent.

Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: Let the trees of the field sing your praise. Protect forests, orchards, rainforests, and all wooded areas from disease and deforestation. Keep us grateful for their gifts of oxygen, food, shade, and shelter. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: You love justice and promise your favor to those who are oppressed, brokenhearted, and incarcerated. Grant wisdom and compassion to those who work for public safety and all who work within prisons, jails, and courts, that mercy may increase and violence wither away.

Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: Give us strength to pray for our world without ceasing and provoke us toward love and good deeds for all who are in need (*especially*). Provide for all without adequate housing, food, employment, or access to health care. Empower us as helpers and advocates. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: Open our hearts to those who serve as truth-tellers in our church and in our society. Bless leaders in church and society in their task of proclamation. Amplify voices of peacemakers, advocates, and especially those whose voices are ignored or marginalized. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: Gracious God. We pray for Lutheran Training Institute as they prepare young people for tomorrow's vocations as well as equipping them to be Christians in today's uncertain world., . Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

A: With gratitude we rejoice in the saints (*especially*) who witnessed to your life in all circumstances, in whom your Spirit was not quenched, even in death. Through them, teach us always to hold fast to what is good. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

P: Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy.

**Amen.**

*The assembly is seated.*

**CHOIR ANTHEM** *Celtic Advent Song*

**A TIME OF SILENT MEDITATION**

*The assembly stands.*

**OFFERING PRAYER**

God our provider,

by your merciful hand abundance springs up from the earth.

Receive and bless these gifts of your own bounty.

Let them be a sign of your steadfast love and faithfulness for all people, through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

**GREAT THANKSGIVING** *P.206 (in the beginning of the hymnal)*

**Dialogue (spoken)**

**Preface by the Pastor**

**Holy Holy Holy p. 207**

**THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

**Words of Institution**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER** *P 145 (in the beginning of the hymnal)*

**INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: In this meal, righteousness and peace meet together.

Come, take your place at the table.

**COMMUNION**

*When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say*  
The body of Christ, given for you.  
The blood of Christ, shed for you.  
*and each person may respond* **Amen.**

**Communion Song** *Lamb of God p. 208*

**SONG AFTER COMMUNION** *Jesus, Name Above All Names*

(repeat twice)

*Jesus, name above all names, beautiful Savior, glorious Lord,  
Emmanuel, God is with us, blessed Redeemer, living Word*

*The assembly stands.*

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

A Generous God,  
in bread and cup you have revealed your glory for all people to see together.  
Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim  
your good news of liberation and release, brought to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**BLESSING**

The God of peace bless you,  
the love of Christ sustain you in hope,  
and the anointing of the Spirit ✠ remain upon you  
now and forever. **Amen.**

**SENDING SONG:** *Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers 244*

**DISMISSAL**

**P;** Go in peace. Keep awake.

**C:** **Thanks be to God.**

**Announcements**

We welcome our visitors and ask that you sign a Visitor Attendance and Holy Communion Card that is located in the pew rack. We ask that cards be returned via the offering plate during the receiving of the offering. We practice “open Communion” here at St. John meaning that all who believe in the “real presence” of Christ are welcomed to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We offer two choices for Holy Communion, wine or grape juice. Those worshipers desiring grape juice are asked at the communion rail to place their right hand over their heart after receiving “The Body of Christ.”

**Remember in prayer:** Rowan Aldridge, Jim Allen, Christine and Dave Barner, Carl Crist, Agnes Cryder, Don Delaney, Helen Delaney, Mary Ellen Dougherty, Joanne Fisher, Dawn Fryer, Dina George, Dawn Hauser, Myrtle Long, Mick Miller, Bob Moriarity, Penny Parks-Dean, Cora Pelletier, and all of our shut-ins.

We also remember in prayer Family Promise; Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and Rev. Michael Burk Presiding Bishop Pro Temp --ELCA; Bishop Craig A. Miller - USS; for our Companion Synods in Liberia and Ansbach-Wurzburg, Germany, and for peace in Ukraine and Israel.

We pray for the safety of our military troops around the world including Mark Baier, Isaac Boring, Jade Cordrey, Ben Cramer, Trevor and Nehemiah Eberhart, Patrick Hamlin, Paul Laidacker, Steven Moore, Maddison Myers, Tyler O'Neal, Adam Shaffer, Jeremy and Haley Naugle Sorrell, Richie Speicher, Aaron Stabley, Paul St. James, Kevin Titus, and Jenna White. We also lift up in prayer their families who strive to keep a normalcy in the family and continue on often with added stress.

Special thanks to this weeks' helpers: Lector --Shane Snyder; Assisting Ministers --Karen Aucker and Gary Johnson; Head Usher --Lon Myers; Teller --Cozette Stoltzfus; Bulletin Sponsor --Joyce Hudson; Children's Church --Cathy Eisner.

Next week's helpers: Lector --Deb Heydrich; Assisting Ministers--Joyce Braucht and Carl Schaefer; Head Usher -- Lon Myers; Teller --Cozette Stoltzfus; Bulletin Sponsor -- Joyce Hudson; Children's Church --Holly Dittmar; Flowers-- Poinsettias.

The flowers are to the glory of God and in loving memory of our brother John Walker by Gina and Gary Johnson.

The Sanctuary Candle in December is in memory of my parents and husband by Joyce Hudson.

The Lutheran Church Women's **Prayer Chain** is a vital ministry of St. John Lutheran. Anyone in need of prayers is asked to contact any of the following persons Gloria Ely – 570-873-3597 Joyce Braucht - 570-398-2852. We are working on **updating the prayer chain**. Please fill out a **blue flyer** and put in the offering plate in you wish to participate. All are welcome!

**This bulletin and more** can be found on our church website: [www.stjl.org](http://www.stjl.org).

Youth are collecting **gloves and socks for Care Closet**. Please bring them and hang them on the clothes line!

**Advent/Christmas Offering.** Each year the Advent/Christmas Offering is received during the Advent/Christmas season and given to two mission projects that will benefit people in need. This year ¼ of offerings received will go to United Churches of Lycoming County which helps a lot of local people and ¾ will go to Mission Support to help spread the love of Jesus Christ to people around the world. Your gifts are greatly appreciated. Advent/Christmas envelopes are in the pews.

**CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTMAS DINNER** is after worship Today. Please bring a casserole to share and your own place settings. Meat and beverage will be provided.



**Youth desiring to go to Camp Mt. Luther** for the annual Grow in the Snow Synod Youth Event March 8 & 9, see Pastor Aucker to register. This is for Middle School and High School Youth.

**CHRISTMAS EVE** at 10 o'clock there is a half hour of **special music**. If you would like to perform and share your talent, please see organist Becky Ward.

### Calendar

Sunday, December 17, 2023 3rd Sunday of Advent

8:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School

9:30 a.m. Worship Service with Children's Church Program

10:30 a.m. Congregational Christmas Dinner

Wednesday, December 20, 2023

11:30 a.m. Fellowship Time at Restless Oaks

6:30 p.m. Choir

Sunday, December 24, 2023 4th Sunday of Advent

8:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School

9:30 a.m. Worship Service with Children's Church

Christmas Eve

4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship at St. John Lutheran

7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship at St. James Lutheran

10:00 p.m. Special Music at St. John Lutheran

10:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship at St. John Lutheran

