

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
229 South Broad Street
Jersey Shore, PA 17740
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Sunday, December 24, 2023
4th Sunday of Advent



Introduction to the day

God keeps the promise made to David to give him an everlasting throne. The angel tells Mary that God will give David's throne to her son Jesus. She is perplexed by Gabriel's greeting and by the news of her coming pregnancy, but she is able still to say, "Count me in." We who know that Jesus is called king only as he is executed still find it a mystery hard to fathom, but with Mary today we hear the news of what God is up to and say, "Count us in."

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 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.

Week of Advent

Praise to you, O God, who lives with us, sharing our flesh and bones.
As Mary waited and Joseph dreamed, so we dream and wait for you.
Bless us and let your face shine upon us, more radiant than these candles,
and more dear than all else we seek.
Restore us when we fail to refuse the evil and choose the good,
and banish all our fears. We pray in the name of Emmanuel,
your promised child and our Savior. **AMEN**

Light One candle to Watch for Messiah 240 verse 4

*Light four candle to watch for Messiah:
Let the light banish darkness.
He is coming tell the glad tidings.
Let your lights be shining!*

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: O Come, O Come Emmanuel 257

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 your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us
from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming
love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father 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 Second Samuel

FIRST READING: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." ³Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Let us read responsively by verse the Psalm.

Psalm: Luke 1:46b-55

^{46b}My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

⁴⁷my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸**for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.**

From this day all generations will call me blessed:

⁴⁹you, the Almighty, have done great things for me
and holy is your name.

⁵⁰**You have mercy on those who fear you,
from generation to generation.**

⁵¹You have shown strength with your arm
and scattered the proud in their conceit,

⁵²**casting down the mighty from their thrones
and lifting up the lowly.**

⁵³You have filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴**You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,**

to remember the promise of mercy,
⁵⁵the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and his children forever.

L: A reading from Romans

Second Reading: Romans 16:25-27

Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

²⁵Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

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. Luke

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Luke 1:26-38

In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

P: The gospel of the Lord.
C: Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

SERMON *Tales from the Stable*
The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY: *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came 265*

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.

You promise mercy to Abraham and Sarah and their descendants forever. Bring your church into thoughtful, caring, and collaborative relationship with those of other faiths. Strengthen our shared values, that we work together in caring for our world. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: As fields and crops lie dormant, bless them with holy rest. Prepare them to thrive, that they provide abundant food in due season. Protect animals who hibernate and provide for all who scavenge for food in the lean season. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: You raise up the lowly and cast down the arrogant. Teach humility to all in positions of authority. Break down systems of oppression, especially systems that perpetuate inequity and exclusion. Do not allow wealth, power, or pride to become idols that obscure your call to justice. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: Look with favor upon all who cry out to you. Accompany with tenderness all who are afraid or ill (*especially*). Rescue all who experience abuse or who live under threat of violence, especially refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seekers in search of a safe and stable home. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: You are pleased to make your home among us. Make our homecomings joyful as we gather with friends, families, and chosen families in celebration. Grant safety to all who travel. Sustain the work of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services and other ministries that assist in setting up new homes. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: Almighty God, we thank you for the work and ministry of Lutheran World Federation as they work with leaders all around the world for justice and peace. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: Blessed are you for Mary and all your servants in every generation who lived according to your promise of mercy (*especially*). Strengthen us by their example until the revelation of your glory is made known. 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 *Almost There*

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

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: Of the Father's Love Begotten 293

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, 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 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;

Next weeks' helpers: Lector –Pam Wehler; Assisting Ministers --Karen Aucker and Cozette Stoltzfus; Head Usher –Lon Myers; Teller –Cozette Stoltzfus; Bulletin Sponsor –Joyce Hudson; Flowers-- Poinsettias.

The flowers are to the glory of God and Ashely and Dylan's anniversary.

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.

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.

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.

Calendar

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

Sunday, December 31, 2023 1st Sunday of Christmas – Installation of 2024 Church Council

8:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School

9:30 a.m. Worship Service

1:00 pm Worship at Nippenose