

First Sunday of Advent, November 29, 2020

Greeting: God is good **all the time**. All the time **God is good**.

Question of the Day:

What is the definition of ‘advent’? a) coming b) notable arrival c) appearance d) emergence

Call to Worship

O that God would tear open the heavens and come down!

Of that day or hour, no one knows, only God.

Be alert! Keep awake! The time is drawing near:

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Prayer as We Light the First Candle of the Advent Wreath

**Holy Anticipation, that breathtaking space in-between
what has been, what is, what is-to-come.**

**Where winter dreams reveal secret longings
and winged angels announce the coming of Love.**

**You draw us to the edge of Advent possibility
like the song of angels drawing shepherds –
eyes wide and breath held –
waiting, watching.**

**Come, settle into our living for awhile
and do not let us settle for too little. Amen.**

Hymn “Mighty to Serve”

Isaiah 64:1-9 *The Message*

Oh, that you would rip open the heavens and descend,
make the mountains shudder at your presence –
as when a forest catches fire, as when fire makes a pot to boil –
To shock your enemies into facing you, make the nations shake in their boots!
You did terrible things we never expected,
descended and made the mountains shudder at your presence.
Since before time began no one has ever imagined,
no ear has heard, no eye has seen, a God like you
who works for those who wait for him.
You meet those who happily do what is right,
who keep a good memory of the way you work.
But how angry you’ve been with us! We’ve sinned and kept at it so long!
Is there any hope for us? Can we be saved?
We’re all sin-infected, sin-contaminated.
Our best efforts are grease-stained rags.
We dry up like autumn leaves – sin-dried, we’re blown off by the wind.
No one prays to you or makes the effort to reach out to you
because you’ve turned away from us, left us to stew in our sins.
Still, GOD, you are our Father. We’re the clay and you’re our potter:
All of us are what you made us.
Don’t be too angry with us, O GOD.
Don’t keep a permanent account of wrongdoing.
Keep in mind, please, we *are* your people – all of us.

Mark 13:24-37 *The Message*

“Following those hard times,
Sun will fade out, moon cloud over,
Stars fall out of the sky, cosmic powers tremble.

“And then they’ll see the Son of Man enter in grand style, his Arrival filling the sky – no one will miss it! He’ll dispatch the angels; they will pull in the chosen from the four winds, from pole to pole.

“Take a lesson from the fig tree. From the moment you notice its buds form, the merest hint of green, you know summer’s just around the corner. And so it is with you. When you see all these things, you know he is at the door. Don’t take this lightly. I’m not just saying this for some future generation, but for this one, too – these things will happen. Sky and earth will wear out; my words won’t wear out.

“But the exact day and hour? No one knows that, not even heaven’s angels, not even the Son. Only the Father. So keep a sharp lookout, for you don’t know the timetable. It’s like a man who takes a trip, leaving home and putting his servants in charge, each assigned a task, and commanding the gatekeeper to stand watch. So, stay at your post, watching. You have no idea when the homeowner is returning, whether evening, midnight, cockcrow, or morning. You don’t want him showing up unannounced, with you asleep on the job. I say it to you, and I’m saying it to all: Stay at your post. Keep watch.”

Response: *The Word of God, for the people of God! Thanks be to God!*

Time of Prayer

How Is It With Your Soul?

Call to Confession

Like a faded, dry leaf that the wind blows away, our sins dry us up; faded and brittle, we are carried off by the wrongs we have done. Yet God loves us still and is able to restore and renew us with the water of life.

Prayer of Confession

God-with-us, even in Advent, we confess that you can seem far away. You are hidden when we need your near. In our hurt, doubt, and fear, we do not try to draw closer to you; instead, we lash out – against you, our neighbor, even those we love. Forgive us, we pray, and come to save us! Let your face shine until our tears are dried, our sins are faded, and our hope is restored. After all, we belong to you, and in your hands, we can be made new.

(Time of silent prayer.)

Assurance

Thanks be for the grace of God, given to us in Christ Jesus, so that we may be blameless when Christ comes again. In the fellowship of the Son we pray together:

The Lord’s Prayer

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

Answer to the Question of the Day

Time of Offering *Thank you to everyone for your faithful generosity.*

Offering Prayer

Gracious God, we give our best to you, not out of guilt or fear, but with gratitude and faith. You have been our support in times of need. Every breath we take is a gift from you. We would be awake and watchful for opportunities to make a difference, to help

others be alert for your presence, to value life in all its fullness, and to learn to care. We dedicate this offering of thankfulness and all the days of our lives to you. Amen.

Message “Waiting for the Coming” Rev. Joyce Rich

Commission and Blessing

The time is coming when God will call us to account.

Be alert and watchful, serving faithfully day by day.

We will look around us for signs of God’s presence.

We will open our eyes to ways to be helpful.

Use the gifts you have been given to the glory of God.

Let the testimony of Christ strengthen you in every way.

We will share our spiritual gifts in word and deed.

We will seek to be shaped by the potter’s hands.

Grace to you and peace, from God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Know that God is faithful, that Christ walks with you, and the Spirit guides you.

With hearts full of gladness, we will do what is right.

With great joy, our lives will show forth our faith.

Amen. **And Amen.**

Hymn “Greater”

Announcements

Read For Next Week: Isaiah 40:1-11; II Peter 3:8-15a

*Liturgical resources drawn from: **Led by Love: Worship Resources for Year B**, Lavon Bayler © 1996 United Church Press; **Feasting on the Word: Liturgies for Year B, Volume I**, Kimberly Bracken Long, editor © 2014 Westminster John Knox Press; and **Simply Wait: Cultivating Stillness in the Season of Advent**, Pamela C. Hawkins © 2007 Pamela C. Hawkins.*