



4th Sunday of Advent

December 20, 2020



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## Introduction

*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."*

## The Advent Wreath

*The Advent wreath has its roots in the pre-Christian practices of northern Europe. People sought the return of the sun in the dark time of the year (at the winter solstice) by lighting candles and fires. As early as the Middle Ages, Christians used fire and light to represent Christ's coming into the world. Using this same symbolism, the Advent wreath developed a few centuries ago in Germany as a sign of the waiting and hopeful expectation of the return in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The wreath, a circle, came to represent the eternal victory over death through Jesus Christ. The evergreens were a sign of the faithfulness of God to God's people, even in death, and the lighted candles were a reminder of the light of Christ brought into the world.*

## *Welcome to Worship*

### **Call to worship**

P A Light has been given for us to welcome us home.  
Praise God for the lantern of hope and welcome.  
Today open your hearts, take courage. God is with us!  
We come this day, continuing our journey toward our true home.

**All Amen.**

## *It's All About the Light*

### **Lighting the Candle of *Love***

P Today, along with the candle of HOPE, the candle of PEACE, and the candle of JOY

we light the candle of LOVE.

On this last Sunday in Advent, we invite the fruit of love to enter our hearts.

Love has looked different this year.

It has been in the manufactured silence of shared screens.

It has been in the wearing of masks for our neighbors.

It has been in the abrupt adaptability of our daily lives.

This candle reminds us that love has no bounds in the midst of a time of strict boundaries. The active, intentional lighting of the candle of love allows us to acknowledge how love has changed us this year. How love has comforted us this year. How love has invited us into a warm candle-lit Advent Wreath through our screens as we prepare for Christmas.

Let us pray,

Holy God, we thank you for this gift of love that is found in Christ Jesus. Remind us of this love in our lives as we prepare our hearts for Christmas.

**All Amen.**

## Confession and Forgiveness

P Blessed be God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit,  
whose forgiveness is sure  
and whose steadfast love endures forever.

**All Amen.**

P Together let us honestly and humbly confess  
that we have not lived as God desires.

*[Silence is kept for reflection](#)*

Loving and forgiving God,

**All we confess that we are held captive by sin.  
In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not  
welcomed the stranger;  
we have not loved our neighbor;  
we have not been Christ to one another.**

**Restore us, O God.**

**Wake us up and turn us from our sin.**

**Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.**

P People of God, hear this glad news:  
by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free—  
free from all that holds you back  
and free to live in the peaceable realm of God.

May you be strengthened in God's love,

✝ comforted by Christ's peace,

and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.

**All Amen.**

## Opening Song

## Come and Behold Him

### Verse 1

Come and behold Him, come see His glory  
Come with an honest heart to see all He is  
We will discover all of His beauty,  
His light will burn away all the darkness we've known. *Refrain*

### Refrain

Come and behold Him. Come and behold Him.  
Come with an honest heart to see all He is.  
Come and behold Him. Wait now before Him.  
Come with an honest heart to see all He is.

### Verse 2

Come and behold Him, come see His mercy  
Come find His tenderness Reaching to you  
Just as a mirror shows a reflection,  
His Word and Spirit come Now reflecting His love. *Refrain*

CCLI Song # 1322573

George T. Searcy | John Chisum

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## The Greeting

**P** The Lord be with you!

**All** And also with you!

## 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.

**All** Amen.

## A Reading from 2 Samuel, the 7th chapter

*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.*

<sup>1</sup>Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup>the 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."

<sup>3</sup>Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

<sup>4</sup>But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup>Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? <sup>6</sup>I 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. <sup>7</sup>Wherever 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?" <sup>8</sup>Now 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; <sup>9</sup>and 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. <sup>10</sup>And 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, <sup>11</sup>from 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. <sup>16</sup>Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

*2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16*

L The word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God!**

## A Reading from Romans, the 16th chapter

*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.*

<sup>25</sup>Now 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 <sup>26</sup>but 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—<sup>27</sup>to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

*Romans 16:25-27*

*L* The word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God!**

### Gospel Reading

*P* The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1st chapter.

**All Glory to you, O Lord.**

*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.*

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

<sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He 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. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>The 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. <sup>36</sup> And 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. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God.” <sup>38</sup> Then 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 our Lord.

*Luke 1:26-38*

**All Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Sermon**

***Pr. Debra Jimenez***

**Apostles' Creed**

*P* Let us join together with the saints across the ages confessing our faith with the words of the Apostles' Creed.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**



## Prayers of Intercession

*L* God of power and might, fulfill your promise and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

*(each prayer petition ends with)*

*L:* Hear us, O God.     *All:* **Your mercy is great.**

Or

*L:* Lord, in your mercy,     *All:* **hear our prayer.**

## The Great Thanksgiving and Words of Institution

*P* The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

*P* Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

*P* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

*P* In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup,  
We proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**All Amen! Come Lord Jesus!**

## The Lord's Prayer

*P* Gathered together In hope, let us pray the prayer Jesus taught us.

***All* 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 and ever. Amen.**

## The Invitation and The Meal

*P* Even as we watch and wait, Christ is here.  
Come, eat and drink.

## Sharing the Meal

## Post Communion Blessing and Prayer

*P* The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

***All* Amen**

*P* Let us pray,

Gracious and abundant God,  
you have done great things for us, and we rejoice.

***All* In this bread and cup you give us life forever.  
In your boundless mercy, strengthen us  
and open our hearts to the world's needs,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

# Stewardship of Life & Ministry Announcements

## Benediction

*P* The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting,  
the long-expected Savior fill you with love,  
the unexpected Spirit guide your journey,  
✝ now and forever.

**All Amen.**

## Sending Song

### Shine on Us

*Verse 3*

Lord let Your love, Love with no end come over us  
Lord let Your love, Love with no end come over us  
That we may be saved, That we may have life.  
To find our way in the darkest night  
Let Your love come over us. Let Your light shine on us.

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Deborah D. Smith | Michael W. Smith  
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## Dismissal

*P* Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong.  
Let all that you do be done in love.

*1 Corinthians 16:13-14*

Beloved of God, go in peace.  
Prepare the way of the Lord.

**All Thanks be to God.**

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**Advent Wreath Reflections**

Candle Liturgies — LiturgyLink.net – a community creating for the relentless return of Sunday

*Submitted by Meredith Menius, Ardmore United Methodist Church, Winston-Salem, NC*

Readings for next Sunday,  
December 27th

**First Reading:**

Isaiah 61:10--62:3

**Psalm:**

Psalm 148

**Second Reading:**

Galatians 4:4-7

**Gospel:**

Luke 2:22-40

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