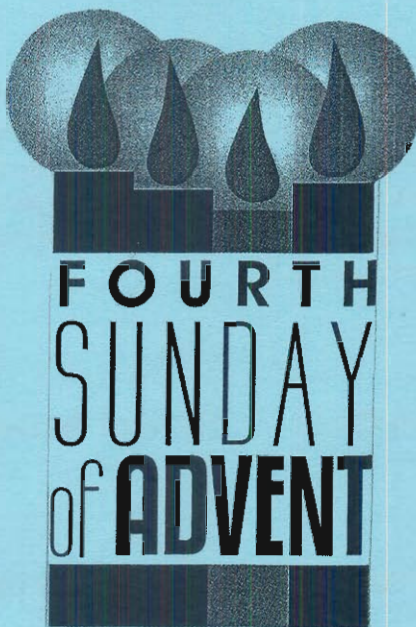


December 23rd, 2012

Fourth Sunday of Advent



BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH OF MALMO

21590 State Highway 47, Isle, MN 56342

Phone: 320-684-2123 (1-877-684-2123) Fax: 320-684-2836

E-mail address: blcmalmo@frontiernet.net

Church Web Site: blcmalmo.org

Pastor: Rev. James Raisanen

Church Secretary: Evelyn Richter

Parish Nurses: Darlene Christensen, RN, C 320-684-2846

Patti Honnold, RN CNP 320-676-8421

Kathy Berland RN ANP 320-495-3988

Ministers: All Members of the Congregation

MISSION STATEMENT

We will grow spiritually and in numbers as we serve Christ. We will reach out and address the hurts and hopes in our community. We will maintain a church home that is reverently joyous and extend a welcome to all who seek to join us in our mission.

Hearing Assistance is available during the service.

Please notify usher if you would like assistance

Sunday, December 23, 2012/Fourth Sunday of Advent

INTRODUCTION

Cradle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and the blessed virgin Mary's magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ's advent is for "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is the kind of tension in which the church always lives as when in the holy communion—with high delight—"we proclaim the Lord's death."

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP by Bell Choir: "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day"

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING HYMN: "Angels We Have Heard on High" # 289 ELW

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

We confess our need: We have sinned by what we have said, thought, and done. We would rather satisfy our own desires than help someone less fortunate. We find giving and serving very difficult, yet buying and spending come so easily. We have become spectators of life rather than participants. We would rather avoid the pain that comes with real relationships. Forgive our sin, God, and renew within us the true joy of living an abundant life. Amen.

Hear the good news: This is the good news of Advent—the Messiah has come! God entered human history in the person of Jesus who suffered and died for us and for our sin. We, by our nature, are people in need of a Savior. The Savior is Jesus and our sin is forgiven. All creation shouts for joy at the good news that Jesus is come and we are forgiven. Praise God. Amen.

GREETING

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

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BELL CHOIR ANTHEM: “Angels We Have Heard on High”

FIRST READING: Micah 5:2–5a

The prophet Micah, having pronounced judgment upon Judah, speaks of a future shepherd-king who, like David, will come from the small town of Bethlehem. (Ephrathah refers to the area around Bethlehem.) This king will restore Israel and bring peace. New Testament writers understood this passage to be referring to Jesus.

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
 who are one of the little clans of Judah,
 from you shall come forth for me
 one who is to rule in Israel,
 whose origin is from of old,
 from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time
 when she who is in labor has brought forth;
 then the rest of his kindred shall return
 to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
 in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

 And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
 to the ends of the earth;
and he shall be the one of peace.

PSALM: Luke 1:46b–55

Refrain: You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly. (Luke 1:52)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:

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

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

You have shown strength with your arm and scattered the proud in their conceit,
casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly.

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

You have come to the aid of your servant Israel, to remember the promise of mercy,
the promise made to our forebears, to Abraham and his children forever. **R**

GOSPEL: Luke 1:39–45 [46–55]

We are presented with Elizabeth, John's mother, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, two women filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. In Elizabeth's inspired greeting and Mary's song of praise we hear of a saving God who remembers, scatters, lifts up, and fulfills all things.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

HYMN: **“O Come, All Ye Faithful”** **# 283 ELW**

SERMON

HYMN: **“Away in a Manager”** **# 278 ELW**

OFFERING & OFFERTORY PRAYER

Creator God, we are filled to overflowing with the joy of this season. As the Magi offered their best to the Christ child, we place before you our offerings from the gifts you have given to us. May they be used to further your work among us. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Filled with expectation and longing, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

A time for silent prayer.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. We pray for your church around the globe, for our neighbors in other faith communities, and for all who still long to hear your voice. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. We pray for your creation, especially where it is wounded; for farmlands and wetlands; for cities and villages; for domestic and wild animals. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. We pray for victims of violence and torture, for children orphaned by disease, war, and famine, and for the sick and injured (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. We pray for doctors, nurses, and midwives; for women preparing to give birth; for adoptive and foster families; for children with special needs. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. We pray for visitors among us, and members who cannot be here; for the safety of travelers; for those who find the holidays difficult. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be made.

With Mary, we magnify you, O Lord, and we bless you for those who nurtured us in the faith. Keep us in communion with the saints who have gone before us, until we also find rest in you. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Hear the prayers of your people, O God, and in your mercy grant us all we need, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine upon, and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you his peace.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CLOSING HYMN:

“Go Tell It on the Mountain”

290 ELW

THOSE SERVING THIS WEEK OF DECEMBER 23RD, 2012

Organist Marlys Beavers
Greeters: Bob & Kathy Carlson
Ushers: Jerry & Carolyn Morris
Lector: Lynn Hansen
Coffee Servers: Church Council

RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD LAST WEEK (12/16/2012)

Attendance: 8:30 – 75 10:00 – 46

Offering: \$ 2,223.00 Building Fund: \$ 260.00

\$ 3, 077.00 – Weekly amount needed for operating expenses.

\$ 580.00 – Weekly amount (building fund) needed for mortgage payment.

THIS WEEK AT BETHESDA DECEMBER 23RD THRU DECEMBER 29TH, 2012

| | | |
|-------------------------------|------------|---|
| Mon., Dec. 24 th | 3:30 p.m. | Christmas Eve Candlelight Service |
| | 5:00 p.m. | Christmas Eve Candlelight Service |
| Tues., Dec. 25 th | 10:00 a.m. | Christmas Day Communion Service followed by Potluck Christmas Dinner |
| Wed., Dec. 26 th | | NO Bible Studies NO Hardanger |
| Thurs., Dec. 27 th | | NO R.O.M.E.O.S. |
| | 1:00 p.m. | Funtimers |

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HOLIDAY CHURCH WORSHIP SCHEDULE:

Sunday, December 23rd – One Service Only at 10:00 a.m. with coffee served at 9:00 a.m.

Monday, December 24th – Candlelight Services at 3:30 and 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 25th – Christmas Day Communion Service at 10:00 a.m.
followed by Potluck Christmas Dinner.

(Please sign up on the sheet in the narthex as to what you would like to bring to the potluck)

Sunday, December 30th – One Service Only at 10:00 a.m. with coffee served at 9:00 a.m.

Sunday, January 6th, 2013–One Service Only at 9:00 a.m. with coffee served at 10:00a.m.

Have you signed up for the **OLD LOG THEATER? NEED MORE PARTICIPANTS** for the January 10th performance. Call John at 218-927-7130.

Watch as **Eve Christensen** sings with Luther College choir's Christmas performance of **"Tidings of Comfort and Joy."** It will be broadcast on **Twin Cities Public Television:**

December 23rd at 7:00 p.m.

December 24th at 1:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

December 25th at 8:00 a.m.

2013 OFFERING ENVELOPES are in the Fellowship Hall and are ready to be picked up. Thank you.

THE WISDOM OF ADVENT WAITING

The moment Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child in her leaped for joy. Like John in Elizabeth's womb, we are stirred by the news of Jesus' birth and his coming into our presence to bring us new life. In this season of waiting, we encounter one in whose image we are made, whose hand and heart formed our inmost being. God in human flesh awakens us to our true identity as children of God, and today that child in each of us leaps for joy!

In the wisdom of Advent waiting, amid outbursts of glad anticipation, we allow the joy of Christ's conception and birth to quietly sink into our deepest knowing. We ponder what it means to have Christ born in us. We embrace the child of God in each other and joyfully welcome a more mature and full expression of the church—the body of Christ—in the world today. In the multi-dimensional already-and-not-yet reality that Christ brings, we wait for the arrival of a whole new world where joy and peace will be ours in full, and all pain and suffering will be no more.

Mary sang a lovely song of praise and thanks for the gift of her Savior child. Then she turned to face the music of the world, a cacophony of shallow human praise, criticism, and blame. After singing the last verse of "Joy to the World!" we too will return to the noise and distraction of the world in which we live. Temptation will occur, threatening to disconnect us from the deep place where God gives us spiritual birth and vitality. Thankfully we have the year-round ministry of word and sacrament as well as the fellowship of believers to help keep us anchored in our true identity as children of God.

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