

December 4th, 2011 Second Sunday of Advent

Introduction to the Day

John called people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing would get in the way of the Lord's coming. The reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.

After a moment of silent meditation to prepare ourselves for worship, we will begin the liturgy.

Prayers of the People

Walking in the light of the coming Savior, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who await God's justice.

A brief silence.

Raise up in your church leaders who will be heralds of good tidings and shepherds who will feed your flock with good things. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Pour out upon our fragile world abundant rain to replenish and restore the earth, and teach us to use our natural resources wisely. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Bring together the leaders of nations according to your will (*especially*), so that righteousness and peace may live in all lands. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Comfort all in need: those suffering from war, those weighed down by sin, and those whose strength is affected by sickness. Speak tenderly to them through the prayers and ministry of Christians everywhere. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Turn the hearts of all in this congregation to heed your call for repentance and amendment of life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Giving thanks for saints full of zeal for the Lord who have gone before us and are at rest in Christ Jesus, we wait for the fulfillment of your promise of a new heaven and a new earth. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your steadfast love and faithfulness, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Lector: Please read the introduction, then the citation (i.e. "The First Reading is from the.... chapter of ..." - then read the text.)

First Reading – *In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. The Lord will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for his sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of the Lord.*

Isaiah 40:1–11

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.
Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"
See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Psalm Psalm 85:1–2, 8–13
You have been gracious to your land, O LORD;
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.
**You have forgiven the iniquity of your people
and blotted out all their sins.**
I will listen to what the LORD God is saying;
for you speak peace to your faithful people
and to those who turn their hearts to you.
**Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you,
that your glory may dwell in our land.**
Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
**Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**
The LORD will indeed grant prosperity,
and our land will yield its increase.
**Righteousness shall go before the LORD
and shall prepare for God a pathway.**

SECOND READING - *This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God.*

2 Peter 3:8–15a

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

* **Gospel Reading** – *The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.*

Mark 1:1–8

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

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,

who will prepare your way;

the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,

make his paths straight,'"

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.