

SALEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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REV. KRISTINA SCHAEFFER, Pastor



Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 13, 2020

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CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever. **Amen.** Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.

Loving and forgiving God, **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.**

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. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. **Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH (based on Isaiah 61: 1-4)

Isaiah, the Prophet, announced it. “The Spirit of God is with me, because I have been chosen to bring Good News to the abused, to bandage the wounds of the heartbroken, and to release those who are in prisons of all kinds. I am here to proclaim a good year in God’s sight, a time when things will be set right. I am here to comfort the grieving and to dress them for happy times instead of sad ones. The people who are healed and comforted will be like strong trees, upright and loyal to God. They will be like a forest planted to show God’s glory. They will rebuild the world and show everyone God’s power.”

We wait for the day of God’s joy, and live in God’s peace and hope, as we light these candles.

Loving God, come and shine your light in the world!

FIRST READING: Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11

The First Reading is from the 60th chapter of Isaiah.

¹The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; ²to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. ⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

⁸For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. ¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

PSALM: Psalm 126 (Read responsively)

¹When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream.

²**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy. Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."**

³The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed.

⁴**Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses of the Negeb.**

⁵Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy.

⁶**Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.**

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24

The Second Reading is from the 5th chapter of 1 Thessalonians.

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil. ²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL: John 1: 6-8, 19-28

The Holy Gospel according to St. John the 1st chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” ²¹And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” ²²Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” ²³He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as the prophet Isaiah said. ²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” ²⁶John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

HYMN: *JOY TO THE WORLD*

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare him room
And Heav’n and nature sing, and Heav’n and nature sing
And Heav’n, and Heav’n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love, and wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.

THE SERMON

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.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again 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

Response to “Hear us, O God” . . . **Your mercy is great.**

HOLY COMMUNION

We celebrate the presence of God in bread and wine. All are welcome to receive this gift.

BLESSING

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. **Amen.**

SENDING

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

In-person Worship Services **have been suspended through January 3, 2021.** This difficult decision was made out of care for our community and neighbor, in response to the information that is coming from our local hospitals, and our desire to follow the Biblical call, “Love one another.” **On-line Worship Services will continue every Sunday morning on our church website: www.salemlutheranchurchselinsgrove.com.**

Drive-In Christmas Eve Service will be held on **December 24th at 7:30 pm in the picnic grove.** Directions to tune into the Service via your car radio will be provided in the bulletin. Please follow the directions of the ushers for parking. If you remain in your car, you do not need to wear a mask. However, if you leave your car for any reason, masks are required. There will be a few fire pits placed around the grove area. Each fire pit can accommodate one family unit. Please dress appropriately for the weather.

Christmas Star Tree: If you took a star from the “Star Tree” to provide a gift for a local child in need, please bring your gift to the church by December 20th or drop it off with Eileen Stauffer. If you need your gift picked up, please contact Eileen.

Christmas Card Exchange: If you would like to participate in our Christmas Card exchange tradition, you can drop off your addressed cards at the church in the big blue storage box that will on the steps of the church . The cards will be sorted and hand-delivered to each church family by Charlie Benner and Harry Maurer. Please have your cards at the church by December 20th.

Remember, during this difficult time, Salem’s financial obligations remain the same. Your continued financial support, as you are able, is greatly appreciated. Offerings can be sent to the church through the mail (Salem Lutheran Church, 899 Salem Road, Selinsgrove, PA 17870) or can be made electronically through our website on the “online giving tab”.