



Sunday, December 17, 2023

Third Sunday in Advent

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David

(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—

to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear

in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Greeters: Mary Ellen Cantrell, Kristen & Matt Bransby, Dotty Leaman, Sonteary & Saron Keat

Ushers: John & Gail Robinson, Bob & Vickie Kutz, Harry & Eileen Flick

Gathering in God's Name

Chimes

Prelude

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

Gus Beaulieu

Welcome & Ministry Highlights

Rev. Allison Beaulieu

*Please sign and pass the "Friendship Pad" down the pew.
At the end of the row, pass it back so that we can greet one another by name after the service.*

Lighting of the Advent Candle

The Caprino family

* Call to Worship

Rev. Allison Beaulieu

Leader: Our God can part the sea.

People: God can bring water from a rock, and provide bread in the desert.

Leader: Our God can walk on water.

People: Our Lord can heal the sick, and turn water into wine.

Leader: Our God sets the stars in the sky.

People: God hears our voice when we cry, and is closer than our own breath.

Leader: There is nothing our God cannot do.

All: Let us stand in awe. Let us worship God with wonder.

* Opening Hymn #15

"Rejoice! Rejoice, Believers"

Proclaiming God's Word

Call to Confession

Rev. Dr. Bob Burns

If you spend any time with a child, you will quickly notice that children see the world differently. For a child, a ladybug is a miracle. A pine tree is a wonder. And water is not only for survival, but for joy. As adults, we forget this language of awe and wonder, and when we do, we distance ourselves from God. In confession, we have the opportunity to close that distance. So let us return to God with hearts wide open. Let us return to God in prayer. Please join me in the prayer of confession:

Prayer of Confession

Rev. Dr. Bob Burns

Holy God, somewhere in our childhood we face pressure to outgrow awe. We turn into adults who obsess over data and facts. We praise those who have all the answers. We shut the door to our curious and wondering hearts. Forgive us for closing those doors to you. Remind us that the kingdom of God belongs to children. Teach us the ways of awe and wonder, so that like Zechariah, when we find ourselves speechless, our first words will be words of praise. With hearts open wide, we pray, Amen.

Kyrie Eleison 572

Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.

Assurance of Pardon

Rev. Dr. Bob Burns

Leader: Family of faith, just as we marvel at mountains and newborns, at sunrises and sunsets, God marvels at us. There is nothing you could do or leave undone that could prevent God from loving you. So hear and believe the good news of the gospel: We are forgiven. We are loved. We belong to God. Amen.

Passing of the Peace

Rev. Dr. Bob Burns

Leader: As we are forgiven and reconciled to God through Christ Jesus, let us be reconciled to one another. The peace of the Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

* Gloria Patri 579

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

*At this time, children through 4th grade are invited to attend Sunday School. Teachers are stationed at the main doors of the sanctuary and will walk the children to the children's classrooms in the Narthex.
Parents/Guardians may pick up their children after the service in the classroom.*

Choir Anthem

"In The Bleak Midwinter"

arr. Harold Darke

Scripture Reading

Luke 1:57-80

Kip Van Blarcom

Message

"We Allow Ourselves to be Amazed"

Rev. Allison Beaulieu

Responding to God's Word

Prayers of Thanksgiving, Lord's Prayer

Rev. Dr. Ann Osborne

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Rev. Allison Beaulieu

Wooden offering boxes are located in the narthex

Going in God's Name

* Closing Hymn #5

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"

* Charge and Benediction

Rev. Allison Beaulieu

* Choral Response

O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;

Bid envy, strife, and discord cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

shall come to thee, O Israel.

Postlude

*PLEASE STAND IN BODY OR SPIRIT

MUSIC: DR. PAUL THORLAKSON, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC
JONATHAN LEFEVER, ORGANIST

A/V: MARK ANDERSON, JERRY ROTHACKER

A description of the stained Chancel window can be found in the front of the hymnal.
FM sound devices are available. Please ask an usher for your own personal receiver.

Cell Phones should be silenced during the worship service.

Video Recordings of the service can be found on the Highland website at www.HighlandPC.org

In the event of an emergency, please refer to the card in the pew racks for evacuation and re-assembly information.