



ST TIMOTHY'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A Service of Light:
Hope in the Midst of Darkness
Friday, December 21
5:30 pm

A Service of Light:

Hope in the Midst of Darkness

Prelude

Ave Maria (Bach/Gounod)
The Wexford Carol (12c. Irish)

The Gathering of the People

(You may remain seated throughout the service except for the reading of the Gospel. Most of the hymns except for Silent Night will not be sung so that you may rest in the holiness of the music.)

Priest: Welcome to our Service of Light, a time when we can, with others, acknowledge some of the difficult feelings we have during the holiday season. Some we know the reasons for and others we seem to know only by the wrestling in our souls. We are here because we hope this will be a time of quiet contemplation where we can name them and offer them up to God. This is the longest night of the year, but tomorrow, we know the dawn **will** come.

Certain phrases come to mind at times like these: “wandering in the desert”, the “dark night of the soul,” “the winter of our discontent” ...times when memories of the past and the pain of present can become overwhelming.

For some, Christmas Day is the most difficult...for others, it is Christmas Eve, or the beginning of a New Year...holiday times when memories are so vivid. For some, it is the reality of coming to terms with a whole new way of living.

In this service, we will listen to quiet contemplative music that soothes our souls, hear beautiful pieces of scripture that remind us of God’s presence and God’s promise of unconditional love. We will have the opportunity to light candles of remembrance and share Christ’s presence in the Eucharist.

Following the service, we will gather in the labyrinth for some refreshments and fellowship recognizing that this is not a season of joy for everyone, but a time of deep need. We are made for community and we need each other.

In the quiet space here tonight we invite you to reflect on the struggles and heartaches you feel and offer them to our great hope, the Christ Child. We pray that you will find hope, comfort and healing knowing that you are never alone in your journey....and that there are many of us who struggle in very similar ways. If anyone here needs time to talk, we can make arrangements to do so....just let us know.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Priest: Let us pray

Collect For Advent

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Hymn “*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*”

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

The Reading from the Old Testament: *Isaiah 61:1-4*

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to 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; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

The Word of the Lord

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Let us read Psalm 121 together.

I lift up my eyes to the hills-
from where is my help to come?
My help comes from the Lord
the maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved;
He who keeps you will fall asleep.
He who keeps Israel will neither
slumber nor sleep.

The Lord himself watches over you,
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
So that the sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night
The Lord shall preserve you from all evil,
it is He who shall keep you safe.
The Lord shall watch over your going out
and your coming in, from this time forth
forevermore.

A Reading from the New Testament: *Romans 8:14-19,34-35,37-39*

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The Word of the Lord

People: Thanks be to God.

Please remain seated

Hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

Please stand for the reading of the Gospel

The Gospel: *Luke 2:1-8*

Clergy: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

People: *Glory to you, Lord Christ.*

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirin'i-us was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Clergy: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: *Praise to you, Lord Christ.*

Sermon Reflection

The Rev. Taylor Dinsmore

CANDLE LIGHTING LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

Clergy: We light this first Advent candle to remember the people we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices. We give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season which anticipates the coming of our Lord at Christmas.

All: *May God's eternal love surround them.*

Hymn: Silent night, holy night

Silent night, holy night,
all is calm, all is bright
'round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace.
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Clergy: We light the second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to You, O God, asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace and healing.

All: *Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and Lead us into your future.*

Hymn:

Silent night, holy night
griefs abound, ever in sight,
Christ now comes in manger bare,
Holds our loved ones in his holy care.
Joy, at last, to be ours.
Joy, at last, to be ours.

Clergy: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months and for some of us, years of down times. We remember the poignancy of memories, the grief, the sadness, the hurts, and the pain of reflecting on our own mortality.

All: *Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.*

Hymn:

Silent night, holy night,
shepherds quake at the sight,
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing alleluia,
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!

Clergy: We light the fourth candle to remember our faith and the gift of hope which God offers to us in the Christmas story. We remember that God who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

All: *Let us remember the one who shows the way and who goes with us into our tomorrow.*

Hymn:

Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Intercessor 1: In the spirit of this season, let us now ask our God for what we need for ourselves as we participate in the Christmas season as people coping with our loss, pain, suffering, loneliness, grief, sadness, illness. In response to the words, "Loving God, hear our prayer", you're invited to respond with "And in your merciful love, answer."

Intercessor 2: God, we come to you as Christmas dawns with the pain growing inside us. As the nights have been growing longer, so has the darkness that has wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of our longest nights, we offer to you the pain in our hearts, the traumas that some of us cannot put into words. Loving God, hear our prayer,
All: *And in your merciful love, answer.*

Intercessor 1: Compassionate God, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. A death or loss has changed our experience of Christmas. Once it was a special day for us too, but someone has died or moved away. Or we have lost a job, a dream, a goal, a cause. We find ourselves adrift, alone, lost. Loving God, hear our prayer,
All: *And in your merciful love, answer.*

Intercessor 2: The Christmas season reminds us of all that used to be and cannot be anymore. The memory of what was, the fear of what may be, stifles us. All around us we hear the sounds of celebration. But all we experience is a sense of feeling blue. Please be near us this night. Loving God, hear our prayer,
All: *And in your merciful love, answer.*

Confession *(said together)*

Holy and Gracious God, you have searched us and you know us, and you know how difficult it is for us to be whole-hearted in our celebration of your Good News this Christmas. There are parts of us which can not hear the angel's song—we believe their tidings of great joy are for some people but not for us. We grieve, God, and we hold tight to our sorrows, but we pray, Lord, that you are there for us.

And so we confess that in our pain and grief we often lack understanding of your grace and love. Forgive us, O God. Continue to love us and help us finally to feel your presence and hear your assurance that you will always travel beside us, and you will help us carry our burdens. *Amen.*

Absolution Almighty God, have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen*

Votive candles are placed on the table near the Advent wreath and there are enough for everyone in attendance. During the music people are invited to come forward to light a small votive candle of love and remembrance from a larger Christ candle naming either silently or aloud the name of the person or persons they miss and wish to remember. Following the service, candles may be taken with you.

Anthem “The Prayer”
“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”
“Lo How a Rose E’er Blooming”

The Peace

Celebrant: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: *And also with you.*

“O Holy Night.”

THE CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY COMMUNION
(All are welcome at God's table)

The Celebrant faces those gathered and says

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People *And also with you.*

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People *We lift them to the Lord.*

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People *It is right to give him thanks and praise.*

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.

Therefore, we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who forever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Celebrant and People

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Then the Celebrant continues

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it, or lay a hand upon it; and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing wine to be consecrated.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me." Therefore, according to his command, O Father,

Celebrant and People

We remember his death,
We proclaim his resurrection,
We await his coming in glory;

The Celebrant continues

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. AMEN.

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

People and Celebrant

Our Father, who are 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,
For ever and ever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

Invitation

The Communion of the People

Hymns: “Let Us Break Bread Together”
“Away in a Manger”
“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

Prayer for the Night (*said together*)

Lord,
It is night.
The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence of God.
It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done;
let it be.
The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in you.
The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us,

and all who have no peace.
The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys,
new possibilities.
In your name we pray. Amen.

The Blessing May the humility of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the joy of the angels, and the peace of the Christ-child be God's gifts to you the Christmas time and always.

Leader: Go forth from this place rejoicing in the power of God's Grace and Hope and Love.

People: *Thanks be to God.*

"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"

Please feel free to remain in the chapel as long as you like.
Then join us for a light reception
in the labyrinth narthex.