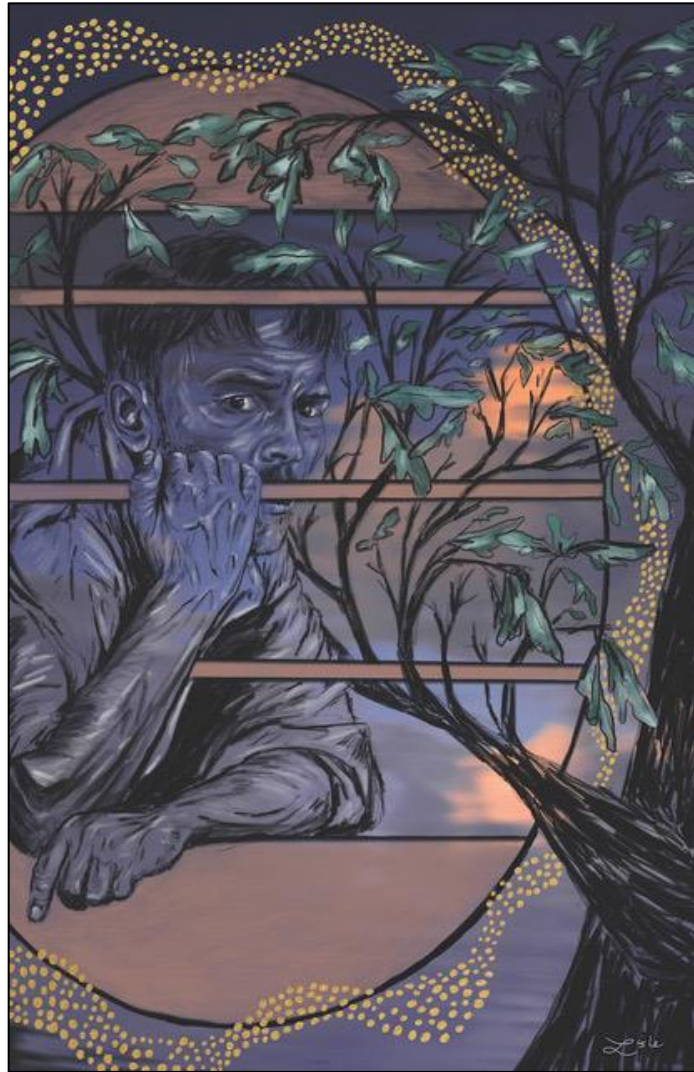

St. Paul's Episcopal Church Piney Parish



God of Justice, Lisle Gwynn Garrity

*The Third Sunday of Advent
Those Who Dream Sow Joy*

December 13, 2020

SALUTATION & PRAYER FOR PURITY

Officiant Once upon a time, there was a little girl who had a terrible day. She left her lunch at home. She skinned her knee on the playground, and no one wanted to sit with her on the bus. As she sank into her mother’s arms at the end of the day, her mother said, “Honey, what was the best part of today?”
 The little girl cried and said, “Nothing! The entire day was terrible.”
 So the mother got down on one knee, wiped away her tears and said, “There is always some good. Sometimes we just really have to look for it.”
 The little girl looked up at her mom and said, “What is good about today?” And the mother said, “For starters, you’re here in my arms.”
 Friends, anytime we gather together to worship God, we are here in God’s arms.
 So may we recognize that gift, and in doing so, may we sow joy.
 Let us worship Holy God.

Blessed be Blessed are you, holy and living One.

People **You come to your people and set them free.**

Officiant Let us pray.

All Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

THE TRISAGION

The musical score for the Trisagion consists of two systems of music. Each system has a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The first system contains the lyrics: "Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,". The second system contains the lyrics: "Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us." The music is primarily homophonic, with block chords in the treble and single notes or simple intervals in the bass.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Officiant Let us pray.

Creator God,

Scripture is flooded with dream-like images: the lion lying down with the lamb, justice rolling like a mighty river, swords being beaten into plowshares, the prisoner being set free, good news to the oppressed, the whole world rejoicing. To our human ears, there are times when these words can sound like nothing more than a far-off dream—downplaying prophecy to fantasy. However, what we know is that to dream is to hope, and to hope is to imagine, and to imagine is to wonder, and to wonder is to believe, and to believe is to live and breathe for your promised day. So give us the strength to listen as we dream, O God. For deep down, we know your words are the very thing we need.

Amen.

YOUNG DISCIPLES MOMENT

Joseph's Joy

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Meg Monroe

The prophet speaks a message of hope to those returning from exile in Babylon.

The LORD God's spirit is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me.

He has sent me

to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim release for captives,
and liberation for prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and a day of vindication for our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
to provide for Zion's mourners,
to give them a crown in place of ashes,
oil of joy in place of mourning,
a mantle of praise in place of discouragement.

They will be called Oaks of Righteousness,
planted by the LORD to glorify himself.

They will rebuild the ancient ruins;
they will restore formerly deserted places;
they will renew ruined cities,
places deserted in generations past.

I, the LORD, love justice;

I hate robbery and dishonesty.

I will faithfully give them their wage,
and make with them an enduring covenant.

Their offspring will be known among the nations,
and their descendants among the peoples.

All who see them will recognize
that they are a people blessed by the LORD.

I surely rejoice in the LORD;
my heart is joyful because of my God,
because he has clothed me with clothes of victory,
wrapped me in a robe of righteousness
like a bridegroom in a priestly crown,
and like a bride adorned in jewelry.
As the earth puts out its growth,
and as a garden grows its seeds,
so the LORD God will grow righteousness and praise before all the nations.

Lector The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

THE PSALM

Psalm 126

In this psalm, the people sing for joy over their deliverance from captivity.

- ¹ When GOD 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.
- ³ Then they said among the nations, *
"GOD has done great things for them."
- ⁴ GOD has done great things for us, *
and we are glad indeed.
- ⁵ Restore our fortunes, O GOD, *
like the watercourses of the Negev.
- ⁶ Those who sowed with tears *
will reap with songs of joy.
- ⁷ Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, *
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

THE GOSPEL

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Deacon The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

All **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

A man named John was sent from God. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. He himself wasn't the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light.

This is John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?"

John confessed (he didn't deny but confessed), "I'm not the Christ."

They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

John said, "I'm not."

"Are you the prophet?"

John answered, "No."

Officiant

As witness to your light and truth, we come to you in prayer, O Lord.

Intercessor

Infuse the heart of your church with your Spirit and focus it on your mission. Renew your people and their leaders as they serve your purpose. Remind us continually whose we are. In the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer, we pray for St. John's Church, Georgetown; St. John's Preschool, Georgetown; St. John's Church, Lafayette Square; and, St. John's Church, Norwood.

Lord of Joy,

hear our prayer.

Turn the hearts and actions of all the words leaders to just and peace. We pray for Donald, our President; Joe, our President-elect; Larry, our Governor; and, the Congress and courts of this land.

Lord of Joy,

hear our prayer.

Open our eyes to what is going on around us. Open our hearts to our siblings throughout the world. Move us to open our hands in love when they are in need and to stand up for them when they are oppressed. We pray for those suffering from natural disasters, from unjust economies, from hunger and want.

Lord of Joy,

hear our prayer.

We know people around us who are suffering from anxiety, scarcity, illness, and loneliness. Some of them we know, and most are unknown to us. We ask that you assure them of your presence and sustain them with your grace. We pray for those we know by name: Lorraine, Joe, Barbara, Re-Gathering Team, Sally, Donna, Diane, Jack, Joyce, Rodgers, Shauna, Margaret, Tom, Jennie, Paul, Hank, Genny, Richard, Carol, Marie, Kathy, Lisa, Sheila, Duncan, and B.J.

Lord of Joy,

hear our prayer.

Our hearts break when someone whom we love dies. Today we mourn for Mike Adams and Valerie Barton, recently departed. May we comfort as we walk with his/her grieving loved ones.

Lord of Joy,

hear our prayer.

The Officiant will add a concluding collect.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Officiant As Christ teaches us, we pray:

All **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 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.**

THE CONFESSION

Deacon Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbors.

All **O Great Writer,**
With a sky full of stars and a world full of flowers, there should be no end to my joy.
And yet, instead of decorating my very being with joy, I let it slip away like loose change.
Instead of singing like Mary, or dancing like David,
I pass by remarkable beauty and love most days, unfazed. Forgive me.
Teach me the ways of children, who laugh and dance and
sing as if joy is the very thing
that keeps them alive.
Maybe they have joy figured out.
Gratefully we pray. Amen.

THE ABSOLUTION

Officiant 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.**

THE PEACE

Officiant The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People **And also with you.**

BIRTHDAY AND ANNIVERSARY BLESSINGS

PRAYER FOR A BIRTHDAY

O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servants *she/he/they* begin another year. Grant that *she/he/they* may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen *his/her/their* trust in your goodness all the days of *his/her/their* life(ves); through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER FOR ANNIVERSARY

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of marriage that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and his Church: Send therefore your blessing upon these your servants, that they may so love, honor, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

O come, O Come, Emmanuel

vv. 5-6

O come, thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on
high, and close the path to misery.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, thou Dayspring from on high,
and cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!

THE BLESSING

THE DISMISSAL

Questions for Reflection

John 1:6-8, 19-28 reminds us that we are not the light, but with John we are called to testify as witnesses to the light, who is Jesus Christ. The verb “to bear witness” occurs thirty-three times in the Fourth Gospel! How can you bear witness, in this season of lights, to the true Light who has come into the world?

Household Prayer: Morning

Light of the world, you greet me this morning with new possibilities. Shine brightly, I pray, until I see into the dark places of this world, and into the dark places of my own life. I want to follow you in paths of justice, speak up with you for liberty, and bend with you toward the brokenhearted, even the broken places within myself. I trade in my faint spirit for your mantle of praise—and with my whole being I will rejoice in you. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Restore me, O God, from the rush of the day. Let me dream this night of all the great things you have done. As the darkness comes and these little lights in my house glow, I give thanks for the greater Light no darkness can overcome. To anyone who mourns or sits in prison or fears danger this night, bring the peace that only you can give. You are faithful, and I know you will do this. In Christ. Amen.

PERMISSIONS

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