
St. Paul's Episcopal Church Piney Parish



*The Fourth Sunday of Advent
Those Who Dream Are Not Alone*

December 20, 2020

SALUTATION & PRAYER FOR PURITY

Officiant I knew joy, but when I heard the laugh of my child,
People **Suddenly, joy was overflowing.**

Officiant I knew love, but when you held my hand,
People **Suddenly, love was overflowing.**

Officiant I knew God, but when you showed me grace,
when you forgave me,
when you loved me,
when you raised me,
People **Suddenly, God was overflowing.**

Officiant So, let us worship Holy God together
As a reminder that God is here and we are never alone.

People **This is community.**

Officiant This is the body of Christ.
People **Welcome home.**

Officiant 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 is written for two voices (Soprano and Bass) in a 4-part setting. 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 in a minor key with a common time signature. The vocal lines are accompanied by a piano accompaniment consisting of chords and single notes.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Officiant Let us pray.

Holy God, Before you could speak, you were speaking—leaping in wombs, kicking, stretching, jumping for joy. You have always found a way to show up in our midst, particularly on our fearful or lonely days. So today, as we crack open our Bibles, fluttering through these old beloved pages, we ask that you would move again. Stir in us. Speak to us. Fill us with the Holy Spirit. And if we are not able to hear your Word clearly, then give us Elizabeths who will point out your presence in delight and joy. Before you could speak, you were speaking, so here and now, Creator God, we are listening. Amen.

THE CANTICLE

Canticle 15

Mary offers a song of praise to God.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; *
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him *
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, *
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, *
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, *
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel, *
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

The promise he made to our fathers, *
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

THE GOSPEL

Luke 1:26-45

Luke's infancy narratives show that the meaning of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection was already implicit in the circumstances of his conception and birth.

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

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

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will

be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?"

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God."

Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Deacon The Gospel of the Lord.
All **Praise to you Lord Christ.**

THE PAGEANT *A Quarantine Christmas: A Nativity Pageant*

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Officiant Let us affirm our faith in the Triune God: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer.
All **We believe that this world is hard—
Harder than it has to be.
When the world falls apart around us,
We believe in listening for the angels that say, "Do not be afraid,"
And in seeking out the Elizabeths in our lives—
Those who laugh with joy at our arrival
And throw open the doors to their homes.
We believe that healthy relationships can offer healing,
Through the laughter of cousins,
The joy shared between siblings,
And the home found in partnership.
Therefore, we believe in church families,
In chosen families,
And in the love that extends beyond family.
We believe in friendships,
In neighbors,
And in leaning on each other when the going gets tough.
We believe in the Triune God—
Lover, Beloved, and Love itself—
Inherently relational, always connected, and never alone.
We believe that that same belovedness exists for us.
We believe that we are loved and claimed,
Never alone.
Thanks be to God for a love like that.**

Officiant

You astounded Mary with her invitation to bear your Son. Surprise us with your delight in us, with your invitation to do your will, with the light of Christ growing with in us. Surprise us, Lord, again and again.

Intercessor

We are your children. Increase the faith in us, day by day, season by season. Empower us to seek and do your will. Cause us to surprise ourselves by opening up our hearts to find that you are always there. In the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer, we pray for Church of St. Stephen and the Incarnation, D.C.; St. Thomas' Church, D.C.; St. Thomas' Church, Prince George's County; and the Chapel of the Incarnation.

Surprise us, Lord.

We pray that the leaders of all nations demonstrate wisdom and a heart for the good of their people and peace between neighbors.

Surprise us, Lord.

We pray that the peoples of all the nations realize freedom and an end to hunger and poverty. Enable a spirit of generosity to flow throughout the world.

Surprise us, Lord.

We pray for our neighbors with whom we work and live. Surprise us with what can be accomplished when we work together for the common good. Open our eyes to see you in each person we meet. Open our hearts and hands to each need we encounter.

Surprise us, Lord.

We pray for healing for those with troubled spirits, who suffer from addiction, loneliness, and despair. We ask for healing for those who struggle with illness or are recovering from surgery, including Lorraine, Joe, Barbara, Re-Gathering Team, Sally, Donna, Diane, Jack, Joyce, Rodgers, Shauna, Margaret, Tom, Jennie, Genny, Richard, Carol, Marie, Lisa, Duncan, BJ, Keech, Jerry, Jim, Tedi, and Ihanu. Reveal to us how to join in your saving and healing work through the power of our Spirit.

Surprise us, Lord.

We pray for those who have died, including Sheila Bradshaw and Dave Thayer, and now rest in your eternal embrace. May the light of your love surround them and comfort those who grieve their deaths. Surprise them with the sure hope of the Resurrection.

Surprise us, Lord.

We are your people. Increase the faith in us day by day. Surprise us with your loving, liberating, and lifegiving presence.

Surprise us, Lord.

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 God of Good News,
You say to me, "You are highly favored," but I struggle to see how that could be.
You say to me, "Do not be afraid," but I am afraid all the time.
You say to me, "Even the impossible is possible, just look at Elizabeth!"
But hope slips through my hands like water.
The impossible still feels impossible.
So today I pray,
Today we pray:
Teach us to sing like Mary.
Teach us to laugh like Elizabeth.
Teach us to trust like the angels.
Forgive us when we can only do one at a time, or none at all.
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. 7-8

O come, Desire of nations bind,
in one the hearts of all mankind;
bid thou our sad divisions cease;
and be yourself our King of Peace
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom Captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!

THE BLESSING

THE DISMISSAL

Questions for Reflection

Mary's song proclaims that God is lifting up the lowly while scattering the proud, and feeding the hungry while sending the rich away with empty hands. How does this change the way you think about God's coming reign of justice and favor? How does this change the way you live?

Household Prayer: Morning

Expectant God, Mary sings because she has new life in her, the promise of your salvation. Fill me with hope this day as I lift my life to you and seek to do your will. Look with favor on our world and all who are in need, that your love may be magnified as I follow humbly in your way. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Lord, as I come to you seeking rest this night, I pray that all may find a home in you, be disturbed by no one, and be free of the afflictions of the evil one, for you, O God, are mighty to save. Amen.

PERMISSIONS

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