

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Third Sunday of Advent – December 11th, 2022

Prelude: by Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

St. Patrick's is hosting a Community Carol Sing in the forest at the Shrine, this afternoon at 2:30 pm. Bring a lawn chair, blanket and mug for Hot Chocolate.

Next Sunday December 18th at 7 pm, the Blenheim Ministerial is hosting a Carol Sing at the Talbot Trail Park in Blenheim. Bring a lawn chair, blanket and mug for Hot Chocolate or Coffee.

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites - Southbuxton.ca and Talbotstreet.ca

Call to Worship:

Eric: Holy One, you created the heavens and Earth and all that is. Happy are those whose help is in God.

People: You bring justice for the oppressed, food to the hungry and set the prisoners free. Happy are those whose help is in God.

Eric: God, you lift up the humble and watch over all who are vulnerable. For all generations, praise God.

Lighting of the Advent Candle:

Eric: Come and let us build a new creation because our hearts are full of song.

People: Our hands are weak and our knees are feeble, but we can't stop ourselves from feeling this gladness so far and wide that it feels like the deserts of our uncertainty burst with bright colours of joy.

Eric: In the joy of this moment, our spirits rejoice.

People: The Mighty One does great things and there is a lightness in our beings that we pray will magnify God's work. We need that light to shine with colour and song.

People: We light the first candle for Peace. *(Light the first purple candle).*

People: We light the second candle for Hope. *(Light the second purple candle).*

People: We light the third candle – the pink candle - for Joy. *(Light the pink candle).*

Eric: With this light, we pray:

People: O God, we place this light in this holy space as a reminder that we are on this journey together. Be light along all our paths. Lead us to a more just world and help us to stay awake and present to your love in each ordinary day. Amen.

Hymn: VU 59 "Joy to the World"

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
let earth receive her King!

Let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

- 2 Joy to the earth! the Saviour 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.
- 3 No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground:
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.
- 4 He rules the earth 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..

Children's Story & Lord's Prayer:

Children's Hymn: VU 6 "A Candle is Burning"

A candle is burning, a candle of peace,
a candle to signal that conflict must cease:
for Jesus is coming to show us the way;
a message of peace humbly laid in the hay.

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright,
a candle of hope in December's dark night.
While angels sing blessings from heaven's starry sky,
our hearts we prepare now for Jesus is nigh.

A candle is burning, a candle of joy,
a candle to welcome brave Mary's new boy.
Our hearts fill with wonder, and eyes light and glow
as joy brightens winter like sunshine on snow.

Scripture: Luke 1: 47 - 55 "Mary's Poem"

Times were difficult, and the people wondered if there would ever be an end to the conflict. They waited and waited and wondered if a leader was coming who would lead them in a new way. They wanted a leader who cared about them, would be fair to them, and, most of all, would love them. They were waiting for a Messiah to come from God. During this waiting, something happened to a young girl in the land.

It was a quiet morning. Mary had gone to the well for her mother and was back in her modest little house mixing the water with flour to make bread for the family. The wind was blowing gently through the window. Suddenly a bright light appeared in the upper corner of the room. Mary was startled and looked up. Was it a person surrounded by light or just light moving and shifting around? Mary was afraid. Was this an angel!? Deep down and all around, Mary heard a voice. Mary heard that she was to have a child, a very special child, and that child would be called Jesus; he would be a blessing for the world. He would be the one the people were waiting and waiting for.

Mary could hardly believe what was happening. How could she, a poor girl from a poor family, be the one chosen to bring such a special child into the world? The more the voice spoke to her, the more she believed. But what would it all mean? She was promised to Joseph in marriage, but the light and the voice convinced her that everything would be all right.

After the light was gone, Mary thought about all that had happened. A poem, like a song, came into her head. Mary's thoughts were all about what would happen when God's child grew up to bring God's word to the people. Her heart was filled with joy.

Her poem was like this. *"Everything that is in me makes God seem greater than ever. My spirit is full of joy because God looks at me, God's poor servant. I can't believe it, but all the people who know me and will know about me will know how blessed I am because of all that God has done. God's love is for all people now and forever. The child I will have will be very strong and will teach proud people just what God can do, and they will become humble. The powerful feel powerless and the poor will feel rich. God will help all of God's people and will always forgive them. God will remember all the promises made to Abraham many, many years ago and will keep those promises for us today and for everyone who will be born into the world."*

Reflection: "Singing a New Song"

Mary is chosen by God for the special task of being Jesus' mother. Mary is young; she has no status or power in her society, she is an unlikely person for such an important task. Yet today, Mary is one of the most well known women in the world. Mary's song shares God's love for all and much like Jesus does later, she challenges the powerful and lifts up the weak.

More than any other female, Mary has permanently marked Christian and Western history and culture, bearing the Christ child as well as all manner of gifts and baggage about the feminine ideal. For the Christian tradition, the Magnificat is the great New Testament praise song of liberation. With elegant power and directness, Mary preaches as the prophet of the poor. Mary is an icon for so many people in Latin and South America that live in poverty. Mary's image lifts up and encourages the poor to be the best they can be. This is the subject matter of "Liberation Theology". Mary's song of love brings the poor tidings of great joy!

The Magnificat is revolutionary, with a long history of being banned by various church or political bodies. As recently as the 1980s, the government of Guatemala forbade the public reading of it, as did the government of Argentina in the 1970s. Franciscan Richard Rohr notes the Magnificat is an elegant example of Jesus'

teachings about the obstacles to the coming reign of God. Rohr calls these impediments the three “p’s”: power, prestige, and possessions. Mary sings at seeing how “the proud,” “the powerful,” and “the rich” will be “scattered...brought down...sent away empty.”

That hurts. For most of us sitting in the United Church this reading is anything but joy. We are the rich of the world. We are the powerful of the world, and many times we are so proud of how much better we are than others in the world. It seems this scripture speaks to us. Where do we find the joy?

If we take this in context, we have the poor in Canada and some of those are in the United Church. Even for most of us, we may be rich by world standards, but are middle class at best by Canadian standards. We as Christians help those with less – the poor – with Christmas Food Baskets, clothes and food banks. We cannot travel ourselves and help the rest of the world, but we can help those in our community. In the United Church we do give to the Mission and Service that helps those around the world. We have given several gifts to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to help the hungry in other countries. We donated to the Red Cross to help in Eastern Canada this fall. These ways of helping - give us Joy!

Mary gives herself to God’s claim on her life. Mary surrenders completely to God. We never hear of Mary’s worthiness or any achievement that made her God’s choice to bear the Liberator of humanity. Mary does not see herself as the actor; instead, God is the do-er and actor. Mary sings for all the generations who have hoped, and hope even still, for God’s vision of justice to come to fullness in their lives. That includes us in the Canadian Churches today.

Mary sings of joy and justice. Her courage to say “yes” and her belief that God will never abandon the promise to be with us - is a profound witness of faith. Mary bears witness to the love of God and God’s vision that exceeds our ideas of power. God’s power is so much more than we humans can even imagine.

The notion that God loves deeply each and every one of us seems not to be accepted by many. Does our perception of being unloved, point to the onslaught of mental health issues, drug abuse, and all kinds of addictions in such a rich country as Canada. What would people do differently if they felt loved? We see it all the time in our community when we help people out when they are down. This year, at the Gift Collection in Blenheim, about a third of those helping to collect, sort and stack food and toys, are folks we have helped in the past. They come to help others now.

A recovering alcoholic has a great outlook on life and they believe life is worth living. Many recovering alcoholics give of themselves to help others that struggle with alcohol and many other addictions. They show a love that the other can understand, in a way we cannot. They understand the person because they have been there. If love is missing they offer a connection that is so needed. It's not about the rich or the poor as much as it is about the human. Jesus teaches us this important message.

The third week of Advent is one of joy, as we hear Mary's song of liberation burst forth in worship. Mary's role as the mother of Jesus is front and center. The tone is celebration and joy, but the message is troubling for those who cling to power and self-importance. For Mary, a humble young woman entrusted to bring Jesus into the world, reveals that the way God sees the world might not always line up with how we see the world. Mary's story upsets those whom we may see as important or influential. Young people such as Mary have significant roles in our communities.

In Advent, we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Saviour, Jesus, who shatters all expectations of what God's power and justice are like. On this third Sunday in Advent, we are called to join our heartbeats with Mary's in praising God. The Spirit fills us with power, as well, to prophesy to God's vision of wholeness that comes to birth in Jesus the Christ. Today we celebrate in Joy, because we are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 899 "My Soul Gives Glory"

- 1 My soul gives glory to my God,
my heart pours out its praise;
God lifted up my lowliness
in many marvellous ways.
- 2 My God has done great things for me:
yes, holy is God's name;
whose people will declare me blessed,
and blessings they shall claim.
- 3 From age to age, to all who fear,
such mercy love imparts,
dispensing justice far and near,
dismissing selfish hearts.
- 4 Love casts the mighty from their thrones,
promotes the insecure,

leaves hungry spirits satisfied,
the rich seem suddenly poor.

- 5 Praise God, whose loving covenant supports those in distress, remembering past promises with present faithfulness.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: In our offerings to God, we provide ways for this community to serve God and sing Mary's song to the world. When we combine what we offer God, our gifts serve Christ in ways we could not alone. Let us worship God with the giving of our tithes and offerings.

Offertory: VU 541 "Praise God From Whom..."

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

People: God of plenty, like a great mother, you fill our lives with love, connection, and ultimate care. In this moment, we hold open our arms and name to you the ways you have blessed us with safe homes, enough food, and the list goes on. We thank you by offering some of our gifts to others. God who knows the world's needs, we thank you so deeply that we know our very best response is to give back to you what was always yours to begin with: our talents, our money, our very best love. Help us to live as Jesus taught. Amen.

Hymn: VU 400 "Lord, Listen To Your Children Praying"

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Pastoral Prayer:

Hymn: VU 35 "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"

- 1 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice!
Give ye heed to what we say: News! News!
Jesus Christ is born today.
Ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

2 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice!
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Joy! Joy!
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He hath opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!

3 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice!
Now ye need not fear the grave: Peace! Peace!
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

Benediction:

Eric: May we, as we leave this place, know the fullness of God's favour resting upon each of us, now and forever more.

VU 7: Joy is a Song:

Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,
telling the world that the Saviour is born.
When God is a child there's joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service.
It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as “In the Spirit We Are One”.

**Cancer: Chris
Paul
Sarah
Terry**

**Reg and Mary Jane
Dave
Bill
Jane
Donna**

Martin and Family

Larry
Kerigan
Fran
John
Ken
Grace
Mel
Natalie
Alice
Susan
Joan
Ingrid