

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Third Sunday of Advent – December 12th, 2021

Prelude: “Joy to the World” – Three Dog Night – by Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Welcome to St. Luke’s Street today as we celebrate the Third Sunday of Advent with emphasis on Joy.

Merlin United Church is hosting a Sunday evening “Carol Sing” in their parking lot - tonight from 6:30 to 7 pm. Gathering time is at 6:15 pm, each Sunday night of Advent. All involved will be required to wear a mask and be fully vaccinated. Come to sing or listen. Bring a lawn chair and dress warmly.

The Alzheimer Society will be hosting their last Tuesday Talks on this Tuesday December 14th from noon to 1 pm. The topic is “Preparing for Emergency Room Visit”. This talk is by Zoom.

St. Andrew’s in Chatham are presenting a Carol for Christmas at the Chatham Capital Theatre on Saturday December 18th at 7 pm. Tickets are \$20 and are available at CKtickets.com

If you know of a family or person who needs some help this Christmas, please share with Pastor Eric and we will get them added to the Christmas Basket list. Today is the last day to offer your Personal Hygiene Collection for the Merlin Christmas Baskets – which will be delivered this Friday December 17th.

Our Christmas Eve Service will be online and delivered to your mailbox. We will have no service on Boxing Day December 26th.

United Church women and their friends are getting together for a Retreat at the Holy Family Retreat Centre in April 1 to 3, 2022. Cost is \$250 per person. If interested, call Brenda Reid.

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

Thank you to our production crew; music by Christie Coatsworth, readings by Annette Skillings and the slides by Tracey Major. You make all the difference. Thank you!

Call to Worship:

People: God is our salvation; we will trust and not be afraid.

Sung Response: “Rejoice the Lord is King”.

Eric: Give thanks to God, who does great things among the nations.

Sung Response: “Rejoice the Lord is King”.

People: Proclaim God’s name with exaltation!

Sung Response: “Rejoice the Lord is King”.

Eric: Come, let us worship God in joy.

Sung Response: *“Lift up your heart, lift up your voice, Rejoice again, I say Rejoice”.*

Lighting of the Advent Candles:

(Light the first purple candle – Candle of Hope)

(Light the second purple candle – Candle of Peace)

People: For the wrath we are always fleeing, we light this candle of joy.

Eric: For the road we never believed we would ever travel, we light this candle of joy.

People: For the questions and curiosities, we light this candle of joy.

Eric: For the fight we didn't know we would need to push on through to victory, we light this candle of joy.

People: For trust in believing that this is the way, we light this candle of joy.

Eric: For this journey we share together, we light this candle of joy.

(Light the pink candle – Candle of Joy)

Hymn: VU 213 “Rejoice, The Lord is King” (Video)

- 1 Rejoice the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks and sing
and triumph evermore.
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:
rejoice; again I say, rejoice!
- 2 Jesus the Saviour reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when He had purged our stains,
He took his seat above.
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:
rejoice; again I say, rejoice!
- 3 His kingdom cannot fail;
He rules o'er earth and heaven;
the keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus given.
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:
rejoice; again I say, rejoice!
- 4 Rejoice in glorious hope,
The Lord and judge, shall come
to take his servants
up to their eternal home.
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:
rejoice; again I say, rejoice!

Scripture: Luke 3: 7 - 18 “Waiting for the Promised One”- by George & Marg Darnley

John shouted in the wilderness, hoping that the people would hear. And they did hear. And they came to him in crowds, surrounding him where he made his home, in the wild next to the Jordan River.

“It’s not that easy, you know!” John shouted. “If you want to change, you need to have something to show for it. It doesn’t matter who your family is. It doesn’t matter where you come from. Your life is like a tree; if it’s not producing fruit for the world to enjoy, then you may as well chop it all down.”

The crowds were intrigued. “OK then. If that stuff doesn’t matter, then what does? John, what should we do?”

“Do you have extra clothes? Extra food? Give them away!” John said. “Do you collect taxes? Well, don’t collect too much; you’re not supposed to steal. Do you serve in the army? Then just do your job; don’t try to scare people by being cruel.”

These answers felt right to the people. They wondered in their hearts if John might be the Messiah, the one God had promised. “No, no, no. I am not God’s chosen one, God’s Messiah,” John said. “I baptize with water, but someone is coming who will baptize with the spirit of God. The promised one will sort everything out, gathering up what needs to be kept and burning away everything that will only get in the way.”

The people welcomed this news. And the people waited to see when the promised one would appear.

Message: “What Shall We Do?”

During this Advent season we are preparing the way for God’s Messiah – Emmanuel. Advent preparation requires us to be open to change. Humans are not all that good at change. We are comfortable where we are at. Even if we feel things are not good and we need to change, knowing how to live where we are at now, is much more comfortable than change. We do not know what change will bring. Fear holds us back. We’d rather stay in the mud we are in, than head out onto dry ground. Advent is the time of year when we can focus on changing into something that will help us to welcome an intimate relationship with God, in the birth of the Messiah. Advent waiting moves us through our questions into expectation of new life. We may very well need to repent – to leave behind that which no longer serves us, as we too are born into a life of actions similar to Jesus’ actions.

Today’s good news does not consist of promises limited to a distant future. No, we know and understand God is near. God rejoices over us. God invites all into renewed relationship. God is about to be born among us this Christmas which is now only two weeks away. That is not a long time. What are you expecting this Christmas? What are you willing to give up, and accept in your life that will move you forward? The waiting will soon be over. Advent will soon be over and Christmas will be here.

Today in Luke’s story, John is preparing the people for a new reality. The gospels place John’s ministry in the wilderness. We may remember that the

wilderness was the setting for Israel's journey from the exodus from Egypt and their entry into the new homeland, 40 years later. Wilderness means preparation and discovery. John's wilderness is far from the powers of Jerusalem's temple and the Roman palace. John provides an alternative voice to the power of the places and persons of their day. John offers an action that can change their (and our) lives – "Repentance".

In Greek, the word "repentance" translates as "have a change of mind". Over the centuries the church has created a much narrower understanding that links repentance exclusively to sin. That understanding does not do justice to the broader understanding of "have a change of mind". Repentance portrays a change of life and heart evidenced in action - as well as attitude. John connects repentance with "bearing fruit". In Jewish wisdom literature "bearing fruit" means the same as one's actions. Your actions show the fruit you bear.

The crowds who travel to the wilderness to hear John include two groups of outcasts: tax collectors and soldiers who were often viewed as collaborators with the Roman occupation regime. John calls them to do their job well and not ask for more than you deserve. With John's action of repentance, these folks are graciously included in God's gift of new life – even as they work for the Roman regime. These folks are to do the right thing for both God and their neighbours. All, John states, are invited to this offer of new life.

Yet John's message is not just about the Messiah whose way John prepares. In repentance everyone benefits with warm clothing, food, honesty and respect. Those previously cheated or bullied, will see new actions from their bullies. Through the act of repentance, the Holy Spirit can work through acts of justice and compassion, as well as acts of refraining from injustice. All of this helps humanity to prepare the way for Messiah and God's realm.

We in 2021 ask the same question of those 2,000 years ago, "What should we do?" Asking this question shows that we are open to change. Change may not be easy, but it is possible. Are we wanting to hear the answer given? Asking questions can serve as a prelude to discipleship. So John and the crowds pave the way for God's reign as announced and embodied in the ministry of Jesus.

On this Sunday of Joy, we can see how the early church heard the challenging message of John as good news. What should we do to share that same joy, and rejoicing? What messages of good news do we hear today? What can we do about inequality, disparity, and greed to bring justice and peace to our community? Yes it

is a big job! Much bigger than any one of us can do alone, but together we can change the world. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 59 “Joy to the World” – Video

- 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.

- 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.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: We live in the wonderful reality of God’s promise. We live in the joy of God’s new day. Let us give thanks to God as we share our gifts and make an offering.

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: With joy we gather water from the well of salvation; from the well which never runs dry. Grant that we too may be like wells that never run dry, pouring ourselves out in joy, for the sake of your world, trusting in your unending grace. Amen.

Hymn: VU 400 “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 & Lord's Prayer:

Eric: O God most high, and yet ever so near, as we continue our waiting for the birth of Emmanuel, quiet our minds.

People: **If we are yet too busy, grant us a centre of stillness that busyness cannot disturb.**

Eric: And grant the same growing stillness, so that the silence of the chosen night may be filled with holiness when it comes.

People: **To the perpetrators of violence, that the clash of their weapons might be stilled.**

Eric: To the young and restless, that they might set aside their anxiousness and listen.

People: **To the retailers and the shopkeepers, that they might set aside their commerce.**

Eric: To the grieving and the hurting, that their wounds might subside.

People: **That all hearts may join together in a holy peace on that night and know, without doubt, that we are one.**

Eric: We are one in the love of God, who loved the world without limit, sending Jesus – God's own child – to live among us.

People: Emmanuel: God is with us.

Eric: Let us pray in joy, the Prayer Emmanuel taught us...

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, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing:

Eric: Rejoice in God always. In joy, may we go with God, who goes beyond all our understanding. May we keep our hearts and minds in the joy of Jesus the Christ, now and forever more.

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: "Joy" – based on J.S. Bach – 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: Tom
Louise

Larry
Louise' Granddaughter - Blake

Betty
Alison
Nancy
Brian
Zoe
Barry/ Marsha
Adrein
Melissa
Lloyd
Flo
George
Hunter – Doctor
Evan – Concussion
Shawna

Ingrid
Brenda
Jim
Jack
Becky
Francine
Gary
Karen
Jim
Sherie & Will
Michigan Families
Jenny
British Columbia