**Saginaw First Free Methodist Church**

**Second Sunday of Advent**

**December 5, 2021**



*“’Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"*

*(Luke 3:5-6)*

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**Prelude**

**\*\*Greeting/Announcements**

**\*Call to Worship** (*spoken responsively*)

L: The Lord God of Israel said, “I will send my messenger”

**P: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight**

L: In the desert prepare the way for the Lord

**P: Every valley will be raised up; every mountain be made low**

L: The glory of the Lord will be revealed

**P: All mankind together will see it**

L: For God will lead the people with joy, in the light of his glory

**P: With the mercy and righteousness that come from on high**

**\*Opening Hymn:** “Of the Father’s Love Begotten” #164 (vv.1-4)

**Of the Father’s love begotten**

**Ere the worlds began to be**

**He is Alpha and Omega**

**He the source, the ending He**

**Of the things that are, that have been**

**And that future years shall see**

**Evermore and evermore**

**O that birth forever blessed**

**When the virgin full of grace**

**By the Holy Ghost conceiving**

**Bare the Savior of our race**

**And the babe the world’s redeemer**

**First revealed his sacred face**

**Evermore and evermore**

**O ye heights of heav’n adore him**

**Angel hosts His praises sing**

**Pow’rs dominions bow before Him**

**And extol our God and King**

**Let no tongue on earth be silent**

**Every voice in concert ring**

**Evermore and evermore**

**Christ, to Thee with God the Father**

**And, O Holy Ghost, to Thee**

**Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving**

**And unwearied praises be**

**Honor, glory, and dominion**

**And eternal victory, Evermore, Evermore**

**Advent Reading**

**Advent 2:**

God’s call to holiness was never meant to be a burden, but a gift that liberates by delivering us from the destructive power of sin. Life-giving holiness, then, is the fruit of full surrender to the loving reign of God over every aspect of our lives, establishing within us a foundation of love that enables us to embrace the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. This is true freedom. This is true life. This, God makes possible in Jesus.

**Introducing the Passages:**

Malachi’s prophecy makes it clear that the Lord we are seeking, the one we most deeply desire, IS coming into our broken lives, our broken world. Our desires will not be left unfulfilled as we seek to become more and more like Jesus. And as Luke reminds us, in God’s tender mercy, God’s light shines into our darkness, into the shadow of death that surrounds us, and guides us into paths of peace and wholeness. Therefore, with Paul we thank God and pray with joy that the good work God has begun in us, a work of holiness and wholeness, of transformation and empowerment, is being carried on to completion. God’s love then leads to knowledge and depth of insight as our crooked ways are made straight and we are filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

**Candle Lighting Litany:** (Light two purple candles while reading)

As we light these candles and look to the coming of Christ, we open our hearts again to the transforming love of God. We receive and rejoice as our deepest desires are fulfilled in the healing wholeness of God’s freedom. We surrender again to this gift of God’s redeeming love as we look to the fullness of God’s kingdom. We trust you, God, praying that you will deepen that trust in the midst of our brokenness. Come, O Come Emmanuel—life-giving God of holiness and life, be with us and in us.

**\*Invocation and Lord’s Prayer**

L: Merciful God, who sent your messengers he prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever more. Teach us to listen, as we pray the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples…

**P: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; your will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**\*Gloria Patri**

**Glory be to the Father​**

**And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.​**

**As it was in the beginning​**

**Is now and ever shall be.​**

**World without end. ​**

**Amen. Amen.​**

**First Scripture Lesson:** Malachi 3:1-4

 See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight--indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

**Prayer of Confession**

L: The path of peace is paved by humility, being quick to listen, making right the wrongs of this world, and accomplishing unity in the Holy Spirit. Live peaceably, so our spirits may grow calm, our vision be clear, and our purpose be unified…

**P: O God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, remember not our offenses, nor the offenses of our forefathers. Reward us not according to our sins; blindness of heart, pride, vainglory and hypocrisy, but to our faithful submission to the Holy Spirit. May it please Thee to show pity upon all prisoners and captives, the homeless and the hungry, and all who are desolate and oppressed. May we please you by supporting, helping, and comforting all who are in danger, necessity, and tribulation. May we be inspired to provide for all women in childbirth, young children and orphans, the widowed, and all whose homes are broken or torn by strife. For through you and in due time, all people may enjoy the bountiful fruits of the earth. Amen.**

**Affirmation of Faith:** Luke 1

**P: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.**

**Hymn of Affirmation:** “Blessed Be the Name” #116 (vv.1-3)

**O for a thousand tongues to sing**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**The glories of my God and King**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**Blessed be the name! Blessed be the name!**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**Blessed be the name! Blessed be the name!**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**Jesus the name that charms our fears**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**Tis music in the sinner’s ears**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**Blessed be the name! Blessed be the name!**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**Blessed be the name! Blessed be the name!**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**He breaks the power of cancelled sin**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**His blood can make the foulest clean**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**Blessed be the name! Blessed be the name!**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**Blessed be the name! Blessed be the name!**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

**Second Scripture Lesson****:** Philippians 1:3-11

 I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

 It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God’s grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

**Children’s Sermon**

**Communion**

**MINISTER: THE INVITATION**

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with

your neighbors and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments

of God and walking in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy

sacrament to your comfort; and humbly kneeling, make your honest confession

to Almighty God.

**IN UNISON: THE GENERAL CONFESSION**

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all

people, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we

remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You, Your

holiness and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger.

We sincerely repent, and we are genuinely sorry for all wrongdoing and every

failure to do the things we should. Our hearts are grieved, and we acknowledge

that we are hopeless without Your grace.

Have mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, for the sake of your son, our Savior, Jesus

Christ, who died for us.

Forgive us.

Cleanse us.

Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life and to honor and praise

Your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**MINISTER: THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

O Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who with great mercy has promised

forgiveness to all who turn to You with hearty repentance and true faith, have

mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from our sins, make us strong and faithful in

all goodness and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**CONGREGATION: THE COLLECT**Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom

no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of the

Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You and worthily magnify Your holy name,

through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**MINISTER: THE SANCTUS**

It is always right and proper, and our moral duty, that we should at all times and

in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven, we

honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying,

**CONGREGATION: THE SANCTUS (CONTINUED)**

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts!

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

Glory be to Thee, O Lord, most high. Amen

**MINISTER: THE PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNION**

We do not come to this Your table, O merciful Lord, with self-confidence and

pride, trusting in our own righteousness, but we trust in Your great and many

mercies. We are not worthy to gather the crumbs from under Your table. But You,

O Lord, are unchanging in Your mercy and Your nature is love; grant us, therefore,

God of mercy, God of grace, so to eat at this Your table that we may receive in

spirit and in truth the body of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, and the merits of His

shed blood, so that we may live and grow in His likeness and, being washed and

cleansed through His most precious blood, we may evermore live in Him and He

in us. Amen.

**MINISTER: THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION OF THE ELEMENTS**

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who gave in love Your only Son, Jesus Christ,

to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who by His sacrifice, offered

once for all, did provide a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world,

we come now to Your table in obedience to Your Son, Jesus Christ, who in His holy gospel

commanded us to continue a perpetual memory of His precious death until He comes

again. Hear us, O merciful Father, we humbly ask, and grant that we, receiving this bread and this cup,

as He commanded and in the memory of His passion and death, may partake of His most blessed body and blood.

In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to

His disciples, saying, “Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of

this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of

sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” Amen.

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting

life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with

thanksgiving.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life.

Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s blood was shed for you and be thankful.

**MINISTER: THE BENEDICTION**

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love

of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and

the Holy Spirit, be yours now and forever. Amen.

**Passing of the Peace**

**Prayers of the People**

L: Lord in Your Mercy…

**P: Hear our prayer.**

**Gospel Lesson****:** Luke 3:1-6

 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

 He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

**Sermon:** “”

**Prayer of Response**

**Hymn of Response:** “More Love to Thee” #463 (vv.1-3)

**More love to Thee, oh Christ, more love to Thee!**

**Hear Thou the prayer I make on bended knee.**

**This is my earnest plea**

**More love, oh Christ, to Thee**

**More love to Thee, more love to Thee!**

**Once earthly joy I craved, sought peace and rest**

**Now Thee alone I seek, give what is best.**

**This all my prayer shall be**

**More love, oh Christ to Thee**

**More love to Thee, more love to Thee!**

**Then shall my latest breath whisper Thy praise**

**This be the parting cry my heart shall raise**

**Still all my prayer shall be**

**More love, oh Christ to Thee**

**More love to Thee, more love to Thee!**

**More love to Thee, more love to Thee!**

**Invitation of Offering**

L:By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. Prepare the way of the Lord, as we collect this morning’s tithes and offerings.

**\*Doxology**

**\*Prayer**

**\*Closing Hymn:** “Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates” Handout

**Lift up your heads ye mighty gates**

**Behold the King of glory waits**

**The King of kings is drawing near**

**The Savior of the world is here**

**Fling wide the portals of your heart**

**Make it a temple set apart**

**From earthly use for heaven’s employ**

**Adorned with prayer and love and joy**

**Redeemer come with us abide**

**Our hearts to thee we open wide**

**Let us thy inner presence feel**

**Thy grace and love in us reveal**

**Thy Holy Spirit lead us on**

**Until our glorious goal is won**

**Eternal praise, eternal fame**

**Be offered, Savior, to thy name**

**\*Benediction**

L: We wait for the coming of Peace into our world. May we prepare the way of Peace into our world. Seek Peace in our world. Go into the world in peace to love and serve. Amen.