

Leaflet Info

**4th Sunday of Advent – December 19, 2021**

Prelude

**Hymn 640**

Opening sentence

Invitation to confession

Confession and Absolution

Gloria

Venite

Canticle 15 and Psalm 80:1-7

First Reading: Micah 5:2-5a

Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10

**Hymn - 558**

Gospel: Luke 1:39-55

Sermon

Apostles' Creed

Lord's Prayer

Suffrages A

Collect for Advent 4

Prayers for Sundays and Those we love

General Thanksgiving

Announcements and *America*

Prayer of St. Chrysostom

The Grace

**Hymn 587**

Dismissal

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Postlude

**Watchmen, tell us of the night**

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**Faith of our Fathers**

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The Rev. Charles Rowins

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**Our Father, by whose Name**

## Lessons for 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent – December 19, 2021

**Collect:** Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### **First Reading: Micah 5:2-5a**

You, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall sand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

### **Canticle 3: The Song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55)**

My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
*and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.*  
For he hath regarded  
*the lowliness of his handmaiden.*  
For he that is might hath magnified me,  
*and holy is his Name.*  
And his mercy is on them that fear him  
*throughout all generations.*  
He hath showed strength with his arm;  
*he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*  
He hath put down the mighty from their seat,  
*and hath exalted the humble and meek.*  
He hath filled the hungry with good things,  
*and the rich he hath sent empty away.*  
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel,  
*as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed 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.*

## **Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10**

When Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God' (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)." When he said above, "You have neither desire nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

## **Gospel: Luke 1:39-55**

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

## Hymns for Advent 4 – December 19, 2021

### Hymn 640 – Watchman, tell us of the night

Watchman, tell us of the night, what its signs of promise are,  
Traveler, o'er yon mountain's height, see that Glory beaming star.  
Watchman, does its beauteous ray aught of joy or hope foretell?  
Traveler, yes; it bring the day, promised day of Israel.

Watchman, tell us of the night; higher yet that star ascends.  
Traveler, blessedness and light, peace and truth its course portends.  
Watchman, will its beams alone gild the spot that gave them birth?  
Traveler, ages are its own; see, it bursts o'er all the earth.

Watchman, tell us of the night, for the morning seems to dawn.  
Traveler, darkness takes its flight, doubt and terror are withdrawn.  
Watchman, let thy wanderings cease; hie thee to thy quiet home.  
Traveler, lo! the Prince of Peace, lo! The Son of God is come!

### 558 – Faith of our Fathers

Faith of our Fathers! living still in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword:  
O how our hearts beat high with joy, when-e'er we hear that glorious word:  
Faith of our fathers, holy faith! We will be true to thee till death.

Faith of our Fathers! Faith and prayer shall win all nations unto thee;  
and through the truth that comes from God, mankind shall then indeed be free.  
Faith of our fathers, holy faith! We will be true to thee till death.

Faith of our Fathers! We will love both friend and foe in all our strife:  
And preach thee, too, as love knows how, by kindly deeds and virtuous life.  
Faith of our fathers, holy faith! We will be true to thee till death.

## **587 – Our Father, by whose Name**

Our Father, by whose Name all fatherhood is known,  
who dost in love proclaim each family thine own,  
bless thou all parents, guarding well, with constant love as sentinel,  
the homes in which thy people dwell.

O Christ, thyself a child within an earthly home,  
with heart still undefiled, thou didst to manhood come;  
our children bless, in every place, that they may all behold thy face,  
and knowing thee may grow in grace.

O Spirit, who dost bind our hearts in unity,  
who teachest us to find the love from self set free,  
in all our hearts such love increase, that every home, by this release,  
may be the dwelling place of peace.

**Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, December 19, 2021.**

Here we are at the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, with our Advent Candle theme of Love. Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Today's lesson from the Gospel of Luke (**Luke 1:39-55**) describes a very interesting transition from Joy to Love, from Third Sunday to Fourth Sunday. This transition involves two pregnant women: Elizabeth and Mary. Mary is carrying Jesus. Elizabeth is carrying John.

Elizabeth is older than Mary, and until recently, had no children. So she, Elizabeth, is delighted to see Mary. They now have something very special in common. For Elizabeth, this is a brand new and really good feeling. And it's a feeling that is reinforced when the child in Elizabeth's womb "leaps for joy" when Mary enters the house.

The two children, from the two wombs, begin a relationship that will change history. Elizabeth's son John in time will baptize Mary's son Jesus. And the rest indeed is history. The Visitation, as the Church knows it, actually took place.

But it's not the baptism and subsequent events that is today's focus. The focus rather is the womb exchange. "For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting," Elizabeth says, "the child in my womb leaped for joy."

An exchange between unborn cousins that would lead eventually to what you and I understand as the greatest act of love in all of history. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

This Divine love is expressed beautifully in the verses that follow Elizabeth's profound happiness. We know it as the Magnificat, the Song of Mary (**Canticle 15 – Luke 1:46-55**).

- My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
- Surely, from now on, all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

- His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
- He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
- He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;
- he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
- He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

You and I, thousands of years later, are the beneficiaries of this Promise of Salvation, this act of Love from the Creator. The sons of Elizabeth and Mary would star in this production: John as the announcer of Divine Love, and Jesus as the fulfillment of that promise.

Think about all the generations since who have shared in this fulfillment. Think about our generation. Think about our experience. Think about this Community, which manifests in so many ways a Love that was promised and a Love that was fulfilled and a Love that continues through you all.

We don't have a starring role in this Production, but we are part of the cast. And, by our presence, we are extending the cast opportunity to many others.

Centuries before Elizabeth and Mary gave birth, and before their adult sons John and Jesus took the stage, the prophet Micah (**Micah 5:2-5a**) announced that there would be a time soon when, out of Bethlehem, a savior would "stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God." And, as a result, "they – we – shall live secure."

And, how great will that Love be? "He shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace." In the words of today's Psalm (**Psalm 80:3**): "Restore us, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved."

And guess what. God delivered on His promise. That fulfillment in the Risen Christ is why we gather. That incredible Love is worth, not only acknowledging, but celebrating, and even more than celebrating by ourselves, sharing with friends, neighbors, strangers, even enemies.

There's a really interesting phrase in today's Second Reading from the Epistle to the Hebrews (**Hebrews 10:9**). "He abolishes the first in order to establish the second." It's a version of sacrifice as a necessary component of victory. "No pain, no gain."

But look at who makes the ultimate sacrifice. It is God, in and through His Son.

God could have said to you and me, "You handle the pain, you handle the death, you handle the downside of life. I want no part of this. It's all on you."

But that's not what God said. It is not what God promised. And it is not what God delivers. "I'll handle the big pain. You will still feel it, but you won't be bound by it. I will share it with you. But, what you can't handle, I will lift from you."

We'll be singing Christmas carols before we know it, one of which reads:

"God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay;  
remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day,  
to save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray.  
O tidings of comfort and joy, O tidings of comfort and joy."

Satan's power. A really tough, discouraging opponent – on our own. But we are not on our own. We are with the Savior of the World. We are with that child whom Mary bore, that nephew of Elizabeth and cousin of John, that carpenter from Nazareth, that Savior who died on a cross and rose from a grave.

"He abolishes the first in order to establish the second." What an incredibly loving gift we have in the Lord Jesus. Thank you, God. Amen.