

Greetings members and friends of the First Congregational Church of Shelburne,

This Sunday is the Third Sunday in Advent. The attached worship resource follows the Advent Service video. The link to this YouTube video is pasted below and can also be found on the church web page, shelburnechurch.org. This Sunday we light the candle of Joy.

Advent Sunday Services are being prerecorded in the church sanctuary and will be available on YouTube. These services will include the lighting of our Advent Wreath, music, prayer, scripture, and a preaching series titled, "*The Questions of Advent.*"

Christmas Eve: It is regrettable that we will not be able to gather together this Christmas Eve in the Sanctuary for our candle lighting service. We are offering two worship opportunities. There will be a prerecorded Christmas Eve service from our sanctuary. The link to this YouTube video will be posted on our church web page. On Christmas Eve, at 7 PM. we will be gathering through Zoom for a service that will include prayer, scripture, music, and candle lighting. The link to this service will be available by December 24th. If you plan to participate, please have a candle ready to light.

May God bless your Advent time!

Pastor Rob

Welcome to the Third Sunday of Advent

December 13, 2020

Good Morning to our members and friends at home,

This Sunday is the Third Sunday in the Advent season. This worship resource is designed to work with the YouTube video recorded in our sanctuary. The link may be found on our church web page, shelburnechurch.org. In our preaching series, *The Questions of Advent*, we have looked at the inquiries of *How will I know*, and *How can this be?* This Sunday's question is asked by Elizabeth when she is visited by Mary, *Why, this happened?*

Prayer Requests: We are accepting requests for prayer (healing, comfort, thanksgiving, and others). Please send your requests to the Pastor at pastor01089@gmail.com. Requests will then be sent out through our email list to the congregation for our common prayer life during the week. PLEASE remember that all prayer requests received become public knowledge. If you are uncertain if your request for another might be confidential, do not send it.

Let us be in Worship.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath: The Candle of Joy

Call to Worship (Responsive, L=Leader, P=People)

L During Advent we wait in joy for the coming Savior Who is our mighty God.

P During Advent we look to the One in whom we find the joy of our redemption.

L During Advent we look to the One in whom we find the joy of forgiveness.

P During Advent we look to the One in whom we find joy in our new freedom.

Opening Hymn: *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*

Unison Morning Prayer and Lord's Prayer

We wake to this morning in anticipation, O God. We wait in hope for the coming of your Christ. We wait for the time of great joy. Help us to remember that true joy comes from knowing you and trusting in your promise of justice filled with love and peace. We pray in the name of Jesus, our savior and our joy, who taught us to pray saying...*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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Prayers of the People

Tis the third week of Advent, O God, and all through our lives, we hurry and scurry, with great haste we write cards, we buy gifts and start wrapping. Tis the third week of Advent and as the cold of winter descends, our pace does it quicken, our tempers they flare, we note each day on the calendar and we often despair, only a few days for shopping, trimming, baking, and mailing, are there. Tis the third week of Advent, and we have made ready in this season of Advent for all except the joy of the season of Advent. O God, calm us down, cool us off, shut us up. Compel us to stop. Compel us to be quiet, still, silent as a church mouse.

And then from our emptiness, our time without noise and the constant shatter of our own voice in our heads, turn us around. Alter our perceptions and change our direction. Tis the third week of Advent, O God, is not your Son the meaning of the Christmas for which we wait and for which we prepare? Is not his the birthday we celebrate, his the glory we sing, his the life we say we pledge ourselves to, even taking his name and making it our own, Christian? Prepare us, O God, in the two weeks that remain to receive from your hands the gift beyond all other giving. Grant, once again, that as your people, we come to understand and rejoice in the immensity of Christmas, the majesty, the grandeur, the intertwining with all things cosmic and universal, all things endless and eternal. Help us, O God, to lift our eyes up, away from ourselves, our needs, our loneliness, our pettiness, our fear and anxiety, that we may take bold steps to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with where you alone desire to lead us. Tis the third week of Advent, O God, and we pray that our hearts make room for the coming of Christ, even as we offer prayers for others.....Tis the 3rd week of Advent and in you, O God, do we find peace, in you, O God, do we find hope, and in you O God, do we find joy, in the coming of Christ. Amen

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:39-56

The Gospel of Luke records the birth of Jesus and John the Baptist. Mary, mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, mother of John, are related to each other and both find themselves pregnant at the same of time. Scripture records that Mary went to visit Elizabeth and stayed with her for some time. It is during this visit that Mary speaks the words that have become known as the *Magnificat*, or the Song of Mary. This song is modeled upon the Song of Hannah in the First Book of the prophet Samuel. Mary's song is a summary of the Hebrew scriptures hope of God's redemption brought about by the coming of the Lord's Messiah. While there is constant and continual debate over the author of this song, there is no reason for denying the possibility that it may have been composed by Mary herself.

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.*

Here ends the scripture lesson for today.

Sermon: *The Questions of Advent: Why Has This Happened?*

This sermon may be viewed in the YouTube video for this Sunday.

The link to this video may be found on our web page, shelburnechurch.org.

Hymn: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

Benediction: Handley C.G. Moule, 1841-1920

The blessing of the Lord rest and remain upon all his people,
in every land and of every tongue.
The Lord meet in mercy all who seek him;
The Lord comfort all who suffer and mourn;
The Lord hasten his coming, and give us,
His people, Joy, by all means. Amen.