

# The Third Sunday of Advent



December 12, 2021

**St. Matthew's Episcopal Cathedral**  
**Laramie, Wyoming**

## Prelude

by Valentina Gavrilova

## Hymn

#65 "Prepare the way, O Zion"

## Gathering

Not in the mighty places of power,  
but in little Bethlehem,  
in a room out back:

**The Messiah is coming.**

Not born in nobility and wealth,  
but of Mary and Joseph,  
who pondered and planed wood:

**The Messiah is coming.**

Not announced by prophets, priests, and kings,  
but by two women,  
who were the first to know:

**The Messiah is coming.**

Nothing will be impossible for God,  
but when and where we least expect it,  
look among the straw and the stars:

**The Messiah is coming.**

## Lighting Candles

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever.  
Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light.  
May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him  
who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Savior and King of the ages.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

**Lord Jesus, light of the world,  
John told the people to prepare,  
for you were very near.**

**As Christmas grows closer day by day,  
help us to be ready to welcome you now.**

**Amen.**

People of God: return! You are called to be God's own. From the mountains announce the good news. God comes in justice and peace, to all who follow his ways. You are God's children.

**Lord, make us one in the peace of Christ today and for ever.**  
**Amen.**

*The Third Advent candle is lit.*

## **The Collect of the Day**

The Lord be with you

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

## **Special Music**

“See Amid the Winter’s Snow”

Arranged by Dan Forrest

Performed by Soren Engstrom

## **First Reading**

A Reading from Zephaniah (3:14-20)

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Canticle 9** *The Song of Isaiah*

Surely, it is God who saves me; \*

**I will trust in him and not be afraid.**

For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, \*

**and he will be my Savior.**

Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing \*

**from the springs of salvation.**

And on that day you shall say, \*

**Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;**

Make his deeds known among the peoples; \*

**see that they remember that his Name is exalted.**

Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things, \*

**and this is known in all the world.**

Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy, \*

**for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel.**

**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**

A Reading from Philippians (4:4-7).

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Hymn**

#460 "Alleluia! Sing to Jesus" (vs. 1=3)

## **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke (3:7-18)

**Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

## **Sermon**

**The Very Rev. Brian K. Gross**

### **An Affirmation of Faith for Advent**

*We stand.*

I believe in God, who bends and kneels toward our world, drenching it in love, making it new with every breath. I believe in Jesus, God become human, who brought every person a spark of the divine. I believe in the Spirit, hovering God, present among us, abiding, upholding, awaking all things to God's grace. I believe we are called to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God and each other, ready for God's reign, awake and alert, as we work to bring it near. I believe we are called as Christmas comes close, to lift up our hearts in hope and in love, seeking God's advent in each moment and person, each challenge and heartache, each blessing and joy.

**This I promise to do. Keep us faithful, Lord Jesus, and come soon. Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Surely, it is God who saves us; therefore, we joyfully pray to the Lord, God our salvation: **Thank you.**

Though hindered by our sins and in need of your bountiful grace and mercy, you never leave us. You are ever in our midst. Renew your Church in love. God our salvation: **Thank you.**

Make your deeds know among the people, O god. Save the lame; gather the outcast. May the exiles know home and all people know your peace. God our salvation: **Thank you.**

May your springs of salvation renew the earth. Heal our planet and restore in us a sense of responsibility and gratitude. God our salvation: **Thank you.**

Merciful God, in this month of great excess and consumerism, call the financial and business communities to act justly and generously. Grant that those without coats be clothed and those without food be fed. God our salvation: **Thank you.**

O God, you have done great things. With thankful hearts we pray to you for those burdened by shame, grief, weakness, or illness, especially Mary, Char, Mei, Carol, Kelly, Deb, Helene, Tiffany, Barbara, Christopher, Tuller, Nina, Marigold, Brad, Mel, Geoff, Judith, Lucas, Justin, Danny, Kinley, Julie, Darcy, Marilyn, and\_\_\_\_\_. Be for them a stronghold and a sure defense. God our salvation: **Thank you.**

God our salvation, gather us, with all those who have died, into your sacred heart, especially Judy and \_\_\_\_\_. Grant us to sing you praises for all eternity. God our salvation: **Thank you.**

Almighty God, as your blessed Son Jesus Christ first came to seek and to save the lost, so may he come again to find in us the completion of his redeeming work; for he is now alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **Amen**

## The Confession of Sin

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. **Amen.**

## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive you all your sins, open your eyes to God's truth, strengthen you to do God's will, and give you the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **Welcoming of New Members**

Dean: Dear Friends in Christ, in companionship with each other as we journey in faith, we welcome new members into this community of St. Matthew's Cathedral. We welcome them to join us as we seek to love the Lord our God with heart and soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We welcome and cherish their unique gifts and experiences as together we follow the Holy Spirit in transforming this community for the work and mission of Jesus Christ.

*The new members of the community are presented.*

Presenter: I present \_\_\_\_\_ to be welcomed as members of this Cathedral.

Dean: Do you desire to continue your journey into Christ as a member of St. Matthew's Cathedral?

New Members: I do.

Dean: Will you commit yourself to seek and serve Christ in this community of faith and pledge to work, pray, and give to build up our common life?

New Members: I will, with God's help.

Dean: Will you who witness these promises, do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?

**People: We will.**

Dean: Let us pray.

**Loving God, we give thanks that you have brought these person to join us in ministry. Knit us together, one to another, so that in unity we may know you and serve you in Jesus' name. Amen.**

## **The Peace**

May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

*We greet each other in the name of the Lord.*

## Invitation to the Offering

Ascribe to the Lord the honor due his Name; bring offerings and come into his courts.

## Choral Anthem

“There Will be Joy”

by Ruth Elaine Schram

Sung by the Cathedral Choir

Celebrant All things come of thee O Lord

People Of thine own have we given thee

## The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We praise you and we bless you, holy and gracious God, source of life abundant. From before time you made ready the creation. Your Spirit moved over the deep and brought all things into being: sun, moon, and stars; earth, winds, and waters; and every living thing. You made us in your image, and taught us to walk in your ways. But we rebelled against you, and wandered far away; and yet, as a mother cares for her children, you would not forget us.

Time and again you called us to live in the fullness of your love. And so this day we join with Saints and Angels in the chorus of praise that rings through eternity, lifting our voices to magnify you as we sing:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

Glory and honor and praise to you, holy and living God.

To deliver us from the power of sin and death and to reveal the riches of your grace, you looked with favor upon Mary, your willing servant, that she might conceive and bear a son, Jesus the holy child of God.

Living among us, Jesus loved us. He broke bread with outcasts and sinners, healed the sick, and proclaimed good news to the poor. He yearned to draw all the world to himself yet we were heedless of his call to walk in love. Then, the time came for him to complete upon the cross the sacrifice of his life, and to be glorified by you.

On the night before he died for us, Jesus was at table with his friends. He took bread, gave thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to them, and said: "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine. Again, he gave thanks to you, gave it to them, and said: "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Now gathered at your table, O God of all creation, and remembering Christ, crucified and risen, who was and is and is to come, we offer to you our gifts of bread and wine, and ourselves, a living sacrifice.

Pour out your Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Body and Blood of Christ. Breathe your Spirit over the whole earth and make us your new creation, the Body of Christ given for the world you have made. In the fullness of time bring us, with all your saints, from every tribe and language and people and nation, to feast at the banquet prepared from the foundation of the world.

Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, for ever and ever.

AMEN.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

*Now, as Jesus taught us, we pray.*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

*The presider breaks the bread. Silence is kept.*

We break this bread  
to share in the body of Christ.

**We who are many are one body,  
for we all share the one bread.**

Bread and wine; the gifts of God for the people of God.

**May we who share these gifts  
be found in Christ and Christ in us.**

## The Communion

*This is the Lord's table where ALL are welcome.*

*If you would prefer to receive a blessing rather than communion, please come forward and cross your arms over your chest. If you do not wish to receive wine please know that receiving only the bread is still a full communion*

## Prayer after Communion

Let us pray.

God of new beginnings, you draw near to us in word and sacrament to strengthen and renew us; kindle in us the fire of your Spirit. May your light so shine through us that all may welcome your Son at his coming. We ask this in the name of Jesus Emmanuel. Amen.

## Blessing

May the God of mercy keep you, the Holy Spirit cheer you, and Christ in glory greet you, now and at the day of his coming. And may the blessing of Almighty God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier be with you now and always. Amen.

## Hymn

#344 "Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing"

## Sending

As we await our coming Savior,  
go in the peace of Christ.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

## Postlude

by Valentina Gavrilova