

The Fourth Sunday of Advent



December 19, 2021

St. Matthew's Episcopal Cathedral
Laramie, Wyoming

Prelude

by Valentina Gavrilova

Hymn

#56 "O Come, O come, Emanuel" (vs 1-3)

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, merciful and gentle: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your light has shone in our darkened world through the child-bearing of blessed Mary; grant that we who have seen your glory may daily be renewed in your image and prepared like her for the coming of your Son, who is the Lord and Savior of all.

Blessed be God for ever.

Lord Jesus, light of the world, blessed is Gabriel, who brought good news; blessed is Mary, your mother and ours. Bless your Church preparing for Christmas; and bless us your children, who long for your coming. Amen.

People of God: prepare! God, above all, maker of all, is one with us in Christ. The Lord is coming!
Come, Lord Jesus!

God, the mighty God, bends down in love to earth. The Lord is coming!
Come, Lord Jesus!

God with us, God beside us, comes soon to the world he has made. The Lord is coming!
Come, Lord Jesus!

We are God's children, we seek the coming Christ. The Lord is coming!
Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

The fourth Advent candle is lit.

The Collect of the Day

The Lord be with you

And also with you.

Let us pray.

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.**

Special Music

“Ave Maria”

William Gomez

Sung by Camila Rabelo

Hail Mary, full of grace,

The Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women,

And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus

First Reading

A Reading from Micah (5:2-5a)

But 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 stand 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 15 *The Song of Mary Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)*

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; *
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: *

the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him *

in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, *

he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, *

and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, *

and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel, *

for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

The promise he made to our fathers, *

to Abraham and his children 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

A Reading from Hebrews (10:5-10).

Consequently, 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 desired 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.

Special Music

"Mary did you know?"

Lowry/Greene

Sung by Katie Williams

Gospel

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke (1:39-45)
Glory to you, Lord Christ.

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."

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

The Mighty One has done great things for us. And so we appeal to God once again, praying, “Stir up your strength, O Lord; *and come to help us.*”

Prepare in us a mansion for yourself, O Christ. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Restore us, O God of hosts. May we know security. May we know peace. May we know the benefits of the reign of your Christ. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Show the strength of your arm, O God: lift up the lowly. Fill the hungry with good things. Look on your children with favor. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Have mercy on all captives and prisoners, O God. Remember them and come to their aid. Fill our hearts with mercy. May we learn to forgive even as you forgive us. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Hear the prayers of your people, O God of hosts. May those who have fed on the bread of tears, feed instead on your strength. We especially pray for Mary, Char, Mei, Carol, Kelly, Deb, Helene, Tiffany, Barbara, Christopher, Tuller, Nina, Marigold, Brad, Mel, Geoff, Judith, Lucas, Justin, Danny, Kinley, Marilyn, Julie, Darcy, Matthew, and_____ O Lord. Show them the light of your countenance and be their salvation. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Great Shepherd, gather your flock into your eternal kingdom, bless the dying, embrace the dead, and comfort those who mourn. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

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.**

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.

Hymn

#325 “Let us break bread together”

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

#74 "Blest be the King"

Sending

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

Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Postlude

by Valentina Gavrilova