

GREETING

P: God says,

C: "Do not be afraid."

P: God says,

C: "I have called you by name."

P: God says,

C: "I will be with you."

P: God says,

C: "You are precious and honored in my sight."

P: At the beginning of this season

C: at the start of the week,

P: at the top of this hour,

C: may we wrap ourselves in these words.**May we begin again.**

P: Let us worship our Holy God.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: In the gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel tells Mary two things: that she is highly favored, and that she is going to have a child. Mary's response to this news is simple. With awestruck authenticity she asks, "How can this be?" Every time we approach confession, I ask myself this same awestruck question, "*How can this be?*" How can God's mercy know no end? How can God be so gracious with someone as fickle as me? Regardless of the week we've had, this good news never changes. So join me in speaking the truth in our lives. Join me in confession and may God's mercy leave you awestruck.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Affirming God

C: Your first words to creation were words of love. You looked at this earth and said, "It is good." You spoke affirmations through the prophets. You spoke blessings over Mary. You spoke belonging through Christ. At every turn, you have reiterated that we are a blessing, made in your image, held in your love. Forgive us forgetting this truth. Forgive us for measuring our worth by society's measuring stick instead of Yours. We believe. Help our unbelief. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

P: Family of faith, I don't know the last time someone told you that you are good, just as you are. I don't know the last time you heard that you are loved and created in the image of God. I don't know the last time you trusted those words and truly believed that you are a blessing. However, in case it has been a while, hear these words from Isaiah: God says:

C: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are

mine.”

P: We are forgiven. We are loved. Let it leave you awestruck.

C: Thanks be to God! May we believe it. Amen.

GATHERING SONG “*Rejoice, Rejoice Believers*” #244

ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING: The Ruggles, Mills, Hefty and Pearson Households

P: In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do we start?

C: Let us begin with the good news! Let us begin by trusting that we are a blessing, loved by a gracious God. Let us begin with music and singing! Let us begin with warmth and welcome. Let us begin with hope.

P: Yes, let us begin with hope.

Ted: Today we light the candle of hope Gene: *Light candle*

P: to shine a light in a worn and weary world.

C: May this be our foundation. May this be our fresh start. May this be our new beginning.

P: May hope flow forth from here. AMEN.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

C: Affirming God, How often do you speak to us, and how often do we miss it? How often do you whisper blessings over us that we refuse to hear? Open our hearts. Create space in us to not only hear these words, but to believe the good news tucked between them. We are hungry for your wisdom, so speak to us now. With hope and curiosity, we listen. With hope and curiosity we dare to begin again. Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 43:1-7

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, ‘Give them up,’ and to the south, ‘Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth— everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.’” Word of God, Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 25:1-10

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

**O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.**

Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.

**Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.**

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!
Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

**All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who
keep his covenant and his decrees.**

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. Word of God, Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

KIDS TALK

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

P: Alleluia!

**C: Stand up and raise your heads—your redemption is drawing near.
Alleluia.**

THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE 1:26-38

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1st chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb

and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.’ Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her. The gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON “*You Are a Blessing! Really and Truly*”

Deacon Ro



When You Pass
Through the Waters
inspired by Isaiah
43:1-7

Lisle Gwynn Garrity

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APOSTLES' CREED

C: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. AMEN.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places the long for God's presence.

A brief silence.

God of righteousness, your people live in hopeful expectation of your coming. Fill your church with renewed passion for our shared mission, and deepen our relationships with other Christians, Prairie Parish, and other faith traditions in our local community, and across the world. Lord, in your mercy.

C: receive our prayer.

P: God of the cosmos, all creation shows that your presence is near. Help us sense your goodness and love in the sun and moon, in sprouting leaves and bare branches, in the roaring sea and quiet breeze. Lord, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

P: God of the nations, your reign extends over all principalities and powers. Give leaders and all in authority hearts for justice and peace. Encourage efforts to enact policies that benefit the common good. Lord, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

P: God of change, you accompany us through life's transitions. Be near to all who are changing jobs, moving, welcoming children, or facing the loss of loved ones. Sustain those who are ill or suffering (*especially...*). In times of change, remind us of your steadfast love. Lord, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

P: God of community, your Spirit holds us together. Sustain our care for one another (*especially through Compassionate Hearts, our Quilters, Men's Coffee, Kids Outreach, Come and Celebrate fellowship providers, Soup and Chili Supper providers, our deacons/ushers/bellringers/readers/media team and Church Council, Christmas Tea providers, Donna, our custodian, and Teresa, our administrative assistant*). Inspire us to seek new ways to live together and to embrace the diversity of thought and

identity in our communities. Lord, in your mercy.

C: receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

P: God of memory, we give you thanks for faithful ones who have died. Tend to our grief and sorrow with renewed trust in your promise of abundant and eternal life.

Lord, in your mercy,

C: receive our prayer.

P: Savior of the nations, come and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ.

C: Amen.

PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

OFFERING

OFFERTORY SONG "*Give Thanks*"

C: Give thanks with a grateful heart. Give thanks to the holy one. Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ His Son. And now let the weak say I am strong. Let the poor say I am rich; because of what the Lord has done for us. Give thanks. Give thanks.

OFFERING PRAYER

P: Creator God, you made the whole world, even the farthest stars, and you draw near to feed us. We praise you for these gifts of bread and wine. Strengthen us with this food that we may live in expectation for the advent of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: Friends, Advent is a season of waiting. We wait for Christ to be born.

C: We wait for the feeling that love is near.

P: We wait for God's promised day.

C: Advent is a season of waiting.

COMMUNION HYMN: "*Christ Be Our Light*" (verse 1+Refrain) #715

P: While we humans are good at many things, waiting is not high on that list. We are an impatient and anxious bunch, eager for the hope of what comes next. Maybe that's why this Table is such a gift. For when we come to this Table, for just a moment, the waiting stops. When we come to the Table, for just a moment, we get a glimpse of God's promised day. We get a glimpse of a world where all are fed and all are welcomed. And for just a moment we can believe the angels when they say, "Be not

afraid.” For just a moment, Mary’s words tumble through our minds—words of justice and hope, words like, “the hungry have been filled” and “the humble have been lifted.”

Because on the night in which He was betrayed, Our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks and he broke it, giving it to his disciples saying, “Take and eat, this is my body, broken and given for you, do this for the remembrance of me.” Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

God of new beginnings, As we prepare to come to this Table, pour out your spirit in this room. Allow this meal to feel like a new beginning. Allow us to experience welcome here. Allow for all to be fed here. Allow for all to sense your presence here. And may these experiences jumpstart our faith, hope, and love in new ways. With hope we gather. With hope we begin again.

LORD’S PRAYER

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray the words Jesus taught us.

C: 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Come to this Table. Come catch a glimpse of what could be. Come end your waiting, for love hovering close. This is what it’s all about. God is all around us. Come. This good news is for you. Everyone is welcome here.

This is Jesus’ table and you are welcome. Please come to the communion rail, kneel or stand receiving the bread from Deacon Ro by extending your hands in thanksgiving. Please take your preferred cup of wine/juice from Marsha when she offers the tray. You may remember your baptism on the way to the rail at the font by dipping your hand or finger in the water and marking the sign of the cross on your forehead. If you prefer not to receive bread and wine and would like a blessing, please come crossing your arms over your heart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P: Generous God,

C: we thank you for the gift of life, for the bread of salvation. We thank you for coming among us, for leading us into peace. We thank you for showering us with mercy, for sending us into the world. Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us as we feed the hungry, the lonely, the down-hearted, in your name. Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

P: As you leave this place, may you have wisdom to lean on one another. May you have the courage to hold onto hope, the compassion to do the good that is yours to do, and the confidence to trust that God sees you as a blessing. For in a world full of dead ends, Advent invites us to begin again! Start here, start now, start with love and begin again. In the name of Christ + our new beginning.

C: Amen.

SENDING SONG “*People Look East*” #428

RINGING OF THE BELLS

SONG OF PEACE

C: My peace I give unto you. It's a peace that the world cannot give. It's a peace that the world cannot understand; peace to know; peace to live. My peace I give unto you.

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.

C: Thanks be to God.

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Good morning and thank you for coming to worship this morning. A warm welcome to all visitors! Please sign the guest book and join us following the worship service for “Come and Celebrate” refreshments in the fellowship hall.