



Hope

*No one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen
any god but you
who acts on behalf
of those who wait
for him!*

ISAIAH 64:4 (CEB)

December 1, 2024

First Sunday of Advent

Welcome to First St. John Lutheran Church! We offer two services with Sunday School for youth and adults and catechism (starting soon). Our regular Sunday schedule is:

8:00 am	Early Worship
9:15 am	JAM Sunday School
9:15 am	Adult Sunday School
10:30 am	Late Worship
2:00 pm	Chapel Communion (2nd Sunday of the month)

LIVESTREAM AND RECORDED WORSHIP: We livestream the service on our church website at www.firststjohn.com. Also, the service will be recorded and published to the website

SMILE! YOU'RE ON CAMERA: Please remember you may be on camera during the livestream and the recording of the service.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Please remember to silence your cell phone before church begins. Thanks!

SUNDAY SCHOOL & CATECHISM JAM Sunday School (church basement) and Adult Sunday School (lounge) meet each Sunday at 9:15 am. First year catechism will start soon! If you have a child in 6-7th grade interested please let Pastor Rayl know.

NURSERY is in the church basement and is now available during 2nd Service each week; you are welcome to sit with your child as well. A diaper changing table is available in the ladies restroom in the basement of the church.

RESTROOMS are in the church basement. Go to the Narthex (lobby) and take either set of steps to the basement hallway. The ladies room is at one end, and the men's room is at the other.

FLOWERS: If you would like to sign up for altar flowers, there is a book in the lounge. Or, you can call the church office during the week to check on availability.

MEMORIALS: If you wish to give a memorial in honor or memory of a loved one, you may mail it in or pick up a memorial card in the church office.

ORDER OF WORSHIP—10:30 am

Preludes Dr. Anthony Pattin

Ring of the Bell (Please stand)

Opening Hymn "Rejoice, Rejoice Believers" No. 244

Lighting the Advent Wreath—The First Candle
First Sunday in Advent: Hope

P: As our days grow shorter and our nights longer, we who are people of faith turn to symbols such as candles, evergreens, and wreaths to proclaim our belief in the unquenchable light. In hopeful anticipation, we prepare for the coming of the Reign of God.

C: We open our hearts to the Living Word of God, the true Light of the World.

P: Every year we light candles as we prepare for the coming of Christ. More and more candles, more and more light, as we watch and wait for Jesus, the Light of the World.

(The first Advent candle is lit)

C: God of Promise, come into our darkness. Renew your hope in us, for you alone bring life out of death.

P: Receive God's promise of hope from Psalm 33:
The eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,
to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

C: We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put our hope in you.

Hymn of Advent – "Hark, the Glad Sound!" - (printed below)
*Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes, the Savior promised long;
Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne and ev'ry voice a song.*

*He comes the pris'ners to release, in Satan's bondage held.
The gates of brass before him burst, the iron fetters yield.*

*Our glad hosannas, Prince of peace, your welcome shall proclaim,
And heav'n's eternal arches ring with your beloved name.*

Invocation

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, (+) one God, who comes to wake us from sleep, who leads us into the light of grace.

C: Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness

P: Let us prepare the way of the Lord by confessing our sin against God and neighbor.

(Silence is kept for reflection)

P: God of all time,

C: we confess that we have not prepared for your merciful reign among us. We ignore our neighbors in need and fail in the labor of justice and peace. In your mercy forgive us. Grant us wisdom to welcome your light and to seek the things that will endure until Christ comes again in glory. Amen.

P: Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. In (+) Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven and all things are made new. Rejoice in this good news!

C: Amen.

Sharing of the Peace

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us share the peace of the Lord.

The congregation may greet one another by shaking hands, fist bumping, or any other form of greeting with the words, "Peace be with you."

We conclude the sharing of the peace by singing: "Lord I Lift Your Name on High" No. 857

***"Lord I lift your name on high;
Lord I love to sing your praises,
I'm so glad you're in my life,
I'm so glad you came to save us.
You came from heaven to earth to show the way.
From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay,
From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky;
Lord, I lift your name on high."***

Greeting

P: The grace given to us in Christ Jesus, the help of the Holy Spirit living in us, and the power of God who calls us with a holy purpose be with you all.

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray. Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection alert us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and redeem us for your life of justice, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

(Please be seated)

Announcements

Lighting the Christmas Tree

P: Let us glorify Christ our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and forever.

C: Amen.

P: Fellow people of God, amid signs and wonders Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned in our sanctuary, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

P: A Reading from Ezekiel 17: 22-24.

Thus says the Lord God:

I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar;

I will set it out. I will break off a tender one from the topmost of its young twigs;

I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain.

On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it,

in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar.

Under it every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind.

All the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord.

I bring low the high tree, I make high the low tree;

I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish.

I the Lord have spoken; I will accomplish it.

P: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

P: Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord.

C: Lord, give light to our hearts.

P: That this tree of lights may remind us of the tree of glory on which Christ accomplished our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, give light to our hearts.

P: That the joy of Christmas may always be in our homes, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, give light to our hearts.

P: That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, give light to our hearts.

P: Lord our God, we praise you for the light of creation: the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night.

C: We praise you for the light of Israel: the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures.

P: We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son: he is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace,

C: who fills us with the wonder of your love.

P: Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we illumine this tree. May the light and cheer it gives be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts. May all who delight in this tree come to the knowledge and joy of salvation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

The lights of the tree are then illuminated.

P: May the God of glory fill our hearts with peace and joy, now and forever.

C: Amen.

"O Christmas Tree" (Sung by the Congregation)

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree

How steadfast are your branches!

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree

How steadfast are your branches!

Your boughs are green in summer's time

And through the snows of wintertime.

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree

How steadfast are your branches!

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree

Your boughs can teach a lesson.

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree

Your boughs can teach a lesson.

That constant faith and hope sublime

Lend strength and comfort through all time.

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree

Your boughs can teach a lesson.

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,

How strong and true God made you!
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
How strong and true God made you!
You bid us all to faithful be,
To trust in God unchangingly.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
How strong and true God made you!

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Upon Timothy's report from the congregation at Thessalonica, Paul is exuberant with gratitude for them. In this passage from his letter, Paul voices overflowing thanks, joy, and blessings for the people of this growing church.

⁹ How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? ¹⁰ Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

¹¹ Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

(Please stand)

Gospel Acclamation



Lord, let my heart be good soil, o-pen to the seed of your word.
Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is un-der-stood.
When my heart is hard, break the stone a - way. When my heart is cold,
warm it with the day. When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.
Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart be good soil.

Gospel Announcement

P: The Gospel according to St. Luke Chapter 21.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Luke 21:29-36

God will fulfill God's purposes and, already, hidden signs of that fulfillment abound. On that great day there will be dismay, perplexity, confusion, and terror, but God's people shall be given strength to stand boldly and receive God's promised redemption.

²⁹ Then Jesus told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴ "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Gospel Response

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

(Please be seated)

SERMON

Pastor Rayl

Sermon Hymn

"The King Shall Come"

No.260

(Please stand)

Apostles' Creed

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,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again 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.

(Please be seated)

The Offering

Offertory Music

Dr. Anthony Pattin

(Please stand)

Offering Prayer

P: God of mercy and grace, the eyes of all wait upon you, and you open your hand in blessing. From all that you have given us, receive these gifts, signs of our thanksgiving and praise.

C: Fill us with good things at your table that we may come to the help of all in need. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer *(Each petition concludes with this response)*

P: Merciful God,

C: Receive our prayer.

The Lord's Prayer *(prayed by all)*

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.

Blessing

P: People of God, you are Christ's body, bringing new life to a suffering world. The holy Trinity, (+) one God, bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you.

C: Thanks be to God.

Closing Hymn *"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"* No. 631

Postlude *Dr. Anthony Pattin*

PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

ELDERS

Bob Haar, Sherrie Haar

READER

Bob Haar

SOUND BOARD

Amy Nelson

2024 POINSETTIA SALE

SPONSORED BY THE ALTAR GUILD



Fill in the form below to place your order for poinsettias to be used during worship at Christmas time. You can place this form with payment in the offering plate or mail it in to the church office. Payment must accompany orders. Checks payable to: **First St. John**

Deadline for placing orders is Sunday, December 15th.

Number of plants @ \$15.00 each _____ Enclosed: \$ _____

Color (circle one) Red White

Name _____

Phone _____

In Loving Memory of (Deceased) _____

In Honor of (Living) _____

December 1, 2024

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Cleared Vision

Now and then, the landscapes and images of ancient scripture mirror our own time so eerily that we catch our breath in amazement. Today's gospel provides such an example. Distress among nations. Fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world. Powers shaken. Yes--we know about these things.

Upset and unease around the globe, reported with unrelenting vigor, may at times threaten to overwhelm us. Wars. Biological weapons. Health epidemics. Human cloning. Overpopulation. Famine. Environmental degradation. These are things that may cause general anxiety. But often, the real terrors are the day-to-day fears. Will I have enough to live on in my old age? Does anyone *really* know me? Are my children responsible, healthy, compassionate? Will I ever be happy? Have I made the right decisions about what to do with my life? Is this all there is? These human-scale worries loom large in our imaginations.

When we are haunted by worry, when our notion of who we are and what we are about seems shaken and unsteady, then, oddly enough, we are most prepared to recognize Jesus when he comes. Formidable circumstances, within or beyond our control, can bring us face to face with our need of a savior. Anxious times bring with them this clarity of vision--a vision harder to come by when everything is just as we think it should be.

On this first Sunday in Advent we are reminded again that the coming of Jesus brings only blessed consequences for those who watch for his coming with faith and hope. Jesus' presence does not guarantee a quick end to our anxieties, but does assure us that they will come to an end, and that in the meantime we are never alone. In word, meal, and the gathered body of Christ, we hear and taste and touch the presence of the one who will not let us go.