



Joy

*The LORD
has done
great things
for us,
and we are
overjoyed.*

PSALM 126:3 (CEB)

December 15, 2024

3rd 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 "O, Come All Ye Faithful" No. 283

Lighting the Advent Wreath—The Third Candle
Third Sunday in Advent: Joy

P: Blessed are you, God of might and majesty, for you promise to make the desert rejoice and blossom, to watch over the strangers, and to set the prisoners free.

As we light these candles, satisfy our hunger with your good gifts, open our eyes to the great things you have done for us, and fill us with patience until the coming of the Lord Jesus.

(The third Advent candle is lit)

P: O, ransomed people of the Lord, come,

C: Let us travel on God's holy way and enter into Zion with singing. Amen.

Hymn of Advent – "Hark, the Glad Sound!" - ELW 239 (Vs. 1 & 4)

*Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes, the Savior promised long;
let ev'ry heart prepare a throne and ev'ry voice a song.*

*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 the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

(Please be seated)

Announcements

INTRODUCTION

Christ's presence in our midst in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of the God in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one "more powerful" than John, even with a winnowing fork in hand, is good

news—and cause for exultation—for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent.

FIRST READING: Phillippians 4:4-7

Despite being in prison, Paul is remarkably upbeat as he writes this letter. Here, he urges his friends in Philippi to trust God with all their worries and concerns with the hope that they will experience God's joy and peace.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

RESPONSIVE READING: Luke 12:2-6 — Congregation responds in BOLD.

² Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

³ **With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.**

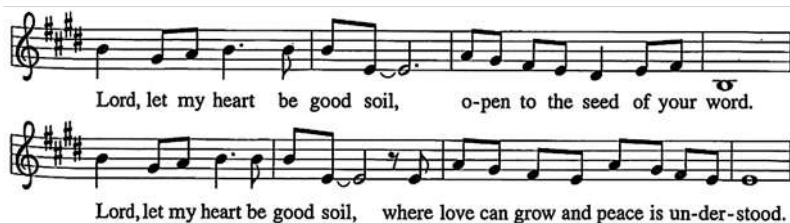
⁴ And you will say in that day:
Give thanks to the LORD,
call on his name;
make known his deeds among the nations;
proclaim that his name is exalted.

⁵ **Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be known in all the earth.**

⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

(Please stand)

Gospel Acclamation



Gospel Announcement

P: The Gospel according to St. Luke Chapter 3.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Luke 3:7-18

John the Baptist heralds the mighty one who is coming. John teaches that preparation for God's reign is not a matter of identity but of bearing fruits of merciful justice, radical generosity, and vocational integrity.

⁷ 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? ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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.”

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” ¹¹ In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” ¹³ He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” ¹⁴ 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.”

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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.”

¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Gospel Response

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

(Please be seated)

**JAM SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM
“THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS”
(See program insert)**

(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 *“Away In the Manger”* *Joel Raney*
FSJ Chancel Choir
Craig Whitaker, Interim Director

(Please stand)

Offering Prayer

P: Our generous heavenly Father, all good gifts come from you and from these riches we bring this offering. Help us to use it for the furtherance of your purpose in this place, and for the benefit of those in need, through our resurrected and living Lord, Jesus Christ.

C: 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: God of endings and beginnings, God in the darkness and the light, God, our hope for the journey, (+) bless and keep you now and forever.

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn

“Go Tell it On The Mountain”

No. 290

Dismissal

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

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Dr. Anthony Pattin

PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

ELDERS

Bill Nelson
Bob Hecklinger

READER

Toni Wilbarger

SOUND BOARD

Mark Ackerman

CHRISTMAS COOKIE SALE FUNDRAISER

SPONSORED BY WELCA

Please consider helping WELCA with their Christmas Cookie Sale TODAY, December 15th after both services. Come to the lounge after either service and purchase cookies donated by the WELCA ladies and friends!



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 TODAY 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 15, 2024

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

What Shall We Do?

John jolts us with his preaching. "You brood of vipers" certainly isn't the kind of greeting we expect to find inside the cards that are arriving in our mailboxes this month. John's description of the consequences of unrepentant and unholy living is a bit more severe than simply finding a lump of coal in one's Christmas stocking. Unfruitful trees--unrepentant lives--chopped down and burned. Chaff consumed by unquenchable fire. If this is "good news," what does bad news sound like?

Faced with the probability or even the possibility of disaster, we might ask, along with John's frightened hearers, "What should we do?" It is human instinct to want to *do* something to keep bad things from happening. So we wear seat belts and teach our kids not to talk to strangers. We install home security systems and avoid eye contact on the street. We exercise and save for retirement.

John's crowds, desperate to avoid God's wrath, beg for guidance: "What should we do?" John's answer is spoken with clarity: Share what you have. Let justice guide your behavior. Like John's questioners, we also need to take this answer to heart. Surely we know at some level where our behavior needs reforming, where our practice of stewardship and justice needs tending, where our love of God and neighbor needs energizing.

Lest we sag under the weight of our own inadequacies, there is another word in today's text that needs hearing. It is the promise of the Holy Spirit, God's indwelling presence with us. Having received the gift of the Spirit in our baptism, the question "What should we do?" is now prompted not by the fear of disaster, but in joyful response to God's gifts of forgiveness, grace, and new life in Christ. This Advent, what shall we do? Change our hearts. Love our neighbor. Rejoice because God has come to dwell with us.