

FIRST LESSON: Malachi 3:1-4
SECOND LESSON: Philippians 1:3-11
THE GOSPEL: Luke 3:1-6

Second Sunday of Advent
December 9, 2018

“Everlasting Peace”
Sermon Preached by Pastor Gary R. Ulrich
American Lutheran Church of Sun City

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Dear Christian Friends, this is the second Sunday of Advent, how about that. Many people when they think about Advent and the Advent season, they say “Hey, we are on our way, 40 days before Christmas., the big one.” You know, the big one where company comes and all this stuff happens. I don’t know what stuff happens in your house, but let me tell you, a lot of stuff happens in our house. I mean, I can’t even make a list of the things that have to be done. Because we are all married to different wives. (congregation laughs)... I’m sorry, that just came out.

Sometimes we get so caught up in what we have to do in preparation for Christmas, we lose the whole aspect of what Advent is. Because it is also preparation and anticipation for a beautiful event that puts us all together into the Christian faith, that is the fulfillment of prophecy. That’s why it is so great that we celebrate Advent through the liturgical year, the time and the day of preparation, not only for Christ coming at Christmas and it’s first born, but for the extension that, the anticipation and preparation for the next time Jesus Christ comes, and that is in the last days. The second coming, you know, Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done. Oh my goodness sakes, we pray for it. But we are pretty tied up into our life that we would like it to come, but like the old story says, not today. Advent gets us prepared for whenever it comes. The liturgical church here highlights four major themes in preparation for Christ’s coming. The lighting of the candles on the Advent wreath helps symbolize, not only these things, but the life and the spiritual direction. God’s journey with us, his promise is fulfilled in our lives, our Christian journey, ourselves as we get into this thing and start walking toward not only the end times, but our life and the blessings of life knowing that we will end up in God’s kingdom.

Basically, the most important and motivating beliefs and attitudes enforces in our Christian life are shared in Advent season, individually one at a time. Last week you heard a beautiful message and journey from Pastor Lowell about God’s committed and capacity to act in powerful and redeeming ways when he talked about hope and his prayer is that this will happen

and as we respond by heeding our walk in the security in our congregation and in our community.

Next Sunday Pastor Lowell will speak of the joy of that journey. It's just not a journey of hard work, although sometime it gets pretty difficult, doesn't it? But the joy of that journey, and the presence of Jesus Christ's love of every step of the way. The fourth Sunday, Pastor Paulson will bring forth that love that continues to motivate us as the abiding binding attitude and examples of life's work, and what can be done. And yes, this morning, we focus upon the whole dynamic of God's work, God's love, and God's promises. The force producing action and mission of Jesus Christ to the world, his people, the church in that phrase that we use so often called *peace*.

As we continue to cry forth with the joy and blessings of everything about us in our lives, that entails our lives that are captured by things that bother us a little bit, are real to us like sickness, and fear, the war between the democrats and the republicans, injustice, prejudices in our own lives, heart breaks of death and dying, storms and crises, and anything that comes upon us, which I call the rages of the world coming upon us. Evil itself, discord in our family, sometimes we cry with the people of all time as we have done this morning in the opening hymn, O come, O come, Emmanuel, come and deliver me, I need a break here, but deliver me dear Lord. The Messiah please come and ransom captive Israel, come Jesus meet me in my life and what happens to me and what is surrounding me, that mourns in lonely exile here, sometimes I feel hopeless, sometimes I feel out of breath, sometimes I don't know what to do. Sometimes I act a little crazy, sometimes the love I think I want to share isn't there. Until the Son of God appears, the hope, the peace, the joy, the love that which is expressed in the Advent season, the deliverer of all from pain and sorrow, so it doesn't bury us. And that's why we say, the people of old, rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to you O Israel, and to us O people of God.

He came to us in life, in the first coming of Christmas, and he showed us the truth, the way and the life. Through his suffering and death he prepared the way of righteousness given to us, the love of God extended to each one of us as his own, safe, secure, hope. Even Jesus says, "When I leave you, there is going to be turmoil in this life, but be of good cheer, I have overcome all of that."

The second Sunday in Advent is peace, peace not out there where you say, would you just give me a break, give me a little peace, I need peace of mind." But peace in here (heart), call it everlasting peace that sustains us through all of these things that happen in our lives, and then the trouble of this world, and the disarray that we have in society, and the injustices that we see.

It all started some time ago, this peace march, with the songs of the angels that woke up the skies and the nations of the world when they sang at Jesus' birth, Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth with those that he loves." Peace on earth. It was pronounced years before by the words of the Psalm writer sang forth confidence and obedience and praise and I will listen to what God the Lord says, he promises peace to his people. Proclaimed by the Prophet Isaiah, for unto us a child is born, a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders and he will be called wonderful, counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace. And as the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ himself said to his disciples upon his departure to heaven, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world do I give it to you, do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful, I give you peace, everlasting peace, now and forever."

This peace is not a shallow peace of world order, a peace between human relations, peace between making friends with people that are having war against each other, peace of emotions, it's not a fix-it peace that can change and then change again, and again, and then that is short-lived, but a peace that strikes deep into us, the soul and it transforms it and binds all to God's love and mercy and with that, we enter this world. Quite a struggle, but with that we enter this world.

The words of the Old Testament, Shalom and the words of the New Testament Elrene, all says peace and that shows peace as a wholeness, a completeness, of tranquility, of calm, free from any disturbance. I am going to keep my mind on this. When people meditate, they are supposed to go deep. That's what our Lord says, "Go deep and get this peace that I have given to you, reach deep into you with a faith that is a spiritual lesson that is built upon submission. My hope is built on nothing less that Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ this solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

This is the everlasting peace, independent of all outward circumstances, everything that makes my mind clear, it goes deep into my heart, a confidence and the love and the care of God, despite all the rage of the world that comes against us. This peace, this state of reconciliation, of friendship, whatever you want to call it about you and God your creator, the righteousness that you have, that you can come to him directly. The peace is built on God's intent for you and me, given to us by the Prince of Peace. Jesus Christ, his blood and sacrifice, the righteousness he has prepared for us, that when we shall come, when the trumpet sound, oh my I then in him be found, faultless to stand before his throne. The journey, the motivation, the peace, the everlasting peace of our faith and life, as that delivering us on our way to life's journey. To life's journey as we live it today.

And then in our text we have presents at a certain time, which I have read that is not to be forgotten, there are so many things in there that say he came at this time. A man called John.

Yes, along came John. And he had two messages all bound up into this peace act. First of all, he said “Repent, repent by changing of the heart, and changing of the mind, it is a spiritual death he is talking about, obedience to a God of love and grace that gives us peace, that takes the sin away from us, the guilt of sin. It is a submission to our creator, God the Father Almighty.” Oh, what a load lifted. And then he says, “Be baptized, washed clean from something to something, your soul is free from contamination, impurities, unstained, free, and we are children of God.” We are God’s own. We are kings and queens in God’s kingdom. A cry, preparation to Jesus coming for all people is beautiful. A cry from the wilderness that John says, the wilderness I am making this cry from. The hindrances, the doubts, the obstacles which separate us from God and our heart, mind and soul, through our life. Straighten out the crooked paths, the rough places, we all have them.

We all get sunk into things that seem to bury us. Deceit, rages of the world that separate us from the love of God. Make paths straight, level out the hills and valleys in your hearts. Sometimes that’s what I call the struggle. See the love and mercy of God of salvation, the Prince of Peace, the good news, the love of God that he loved you. The gift of his son in doing the sacrifice for you, knowing that this God is with us every second of the day, touching our every ill, seeing and feeling the experience of God with us is what this heart does, keeping us steadfast with the heavenly Father, prepare the way of the Lord to show his saving glory in you. For this is the call of the pulpit hymn. I hope you got a little excited about that, it’s an old song, but it seems to move me from where I am to where I should be.

My prayer, as Pastor Lowell prays, is for God to keep calling us to serve in his world. The world that we live in, that’s our world. In what we do, and through what we do, but using God’s peace in our heart, the confidence that we walk well in God’s peace in God’s kingdom. He has heard our cries, he has given us the good news, to witness to others so that we may say, “Yes, it is I Lord, I am here, I will serve.” Not only in a specific position, but in our parenting, in our lives, in our occupations, in working with each other, individual, now together.

The example of this is the community we have in Stephen Ministry, where all this education you hear about is really a transformation and moving out of the fix-it world, using the skills and talents that people have, getting us out of this fix-it world that has encaptured us, to where we truly believe that we are the caregivers, Jesus Christ is the cure-giver so that people can stand up independently and worship their God. I pray for all of you that we have this peaceS, but most of all, I pray for the peace of all, God’s everlasting peace and that it begin with me.

God bless us all and may this peace, this everlasting peace be and abide with you all. Amen