

Order of Service for December 27, 2020
1st Sunday after Christmas
St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Lebanon, OR
Rev. Sb. AJ Jonah Buckley



A Greeting

Today's Collect:

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

First Reading -- Isaiah 61:10-62:3

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.
For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,
and her salvation like a burning torch.
The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.
You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

- Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people:
✦ **Thanks be to God**

Psalm 147: 13-21

13 Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem; *
praise your God, O Zion;
14 For he has strengthened the bars of your gates; *
he has blessed your children within you.
15 He has established peace on your borders; *
he satisfies you with the finest wheat.
16 He sends out his command to the earth, *
and his word runs very swiftly.



17 He gives snow like wool; *
he scatters hoarfrost like ashes.
18 He scatters his hail like bread crumbs; *
who can stand against his cold?
19 He sends forth his word and melts them; *
he blows with his wind, and the waters flow.
20 He declares his word to Jacob, *
his statutes and his judgments to Israel.
21 He has not done so to any other nation; *
to them he has not revealed his judgments.
Hallelujah!

Second Lesson – Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

- ✦ Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people:
- ✦ **Thanks be to God**

A Reading from the Gospel of John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people: did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was



before me."") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

- ✦ This is the Gospel of the Lord
- ✦ **Thanks be to God**

Homily *"Yet the World Did Not Know Him"*

The Rev. Sb. AJ Jonah Buckley

Sometimes I trace my hands along my husband's face, sometimes I spend hours listening to his stories (he's quite a bard so he never runs out of stories), sometimes it's the relief of the way we fit together perfectly when snuggled up in bed or on the couch, or the way he'll get me a hot chocolate without me asking or how for Christmas last year he spent hours upon hours hand-carving a beard comb; the perfect gift for a transman excitedly awaiting my beard to come in. It's **almost** long enough, a year later, to use the comb. He just knows. It's these ways and many more that often have me realizing that this man really knows me; he gets me, in all the ways, big and small. And we also talk about how we look forward to each new year getting to know each other more and more because we can never really know each other fully. We're always changing and growing, so in growing old together, we choose to keep learning to love each other best over and over again. We probably know each other better than anyone knows either of us. This is the context in which I've come to understand what it means to love someone else. So when I think about God, and God's love for us, I think of it through the context of my love for Finn.

Yet, I still cannot even begin to fathom the depths of God's love for humanity and all creation. God knows us infinitely more than even we know each other. God sang all life into being. Each and every one of us. God is there in our waking and our sleeping, our dreams and hopes and fears. God knows it all. And not in like some creepy stalker-ish kind of way, but in a "so that I can love you better" way. That's what I'm talking about. And, I don't know about you, but that blows my mind when I think about it. To be SO intimately KNOWN, and unlike my fears might tell me, God doesn't go running away, but towards us. I think that it is in loving one another, in loving our neighbor, in loving ourselves---truly loving, that we get to know God, and get a glimpse of the magnitude of the love God has for us, of how God knows us.

Our readings today are a great depiction of God's love story with humanity that began before there was even life on Earth...when it was just a mess of molecules and potential, God spoke it into being. That's what we mean by "in the beginning." This is more than a "once upon a time" of a fairy tale. It is a literary connection to Genesis and the first words of the Bible: "In the beginning." There is no time that God was not intimately involved in light and life. God is present and within all things. There's this pervasiveness to God that if it were in the ocean we would call it God-infested waters.

I cannot help but think of God when I'm watching a nature documentary--one of those many ones narrated by David Attenborough...I am a huge nerd for them; I can't get enough of them. This leaves me speechless already, but then, then there's the unspeakable intimacy of Jesus' birth. Jesus, the Word, becomes Flesh and dwells among us. Abides with us. Lives among us. Emmanuel--God with us. Not God above us, far off in heaven, or in our minds, but in our hearts, our lives, our flesh. God-within-us.



This is what John is witnessing so that we might also have that intimacy with God. That, we, too, may be children of God. The bond between parent and child is unique, more so between God and each of us as God's children. This is a God that isn't afraid to get hands dirty; this is a God that isn't afraid of rejection. This is a God that was born into the very same world God's own children inhabit to experience the human experience. I sometimes think God did so as an expression of empathy, to understand, to know us better. Knowing the names of all the stars, calling them all by name; knowing the names of all the people and creatures, walking beside them in the garden wasn't enough; I think God wanted to know us better, that God saw us suffering and sent Jesus, the Messiah to be born, and to show us another way. That God wanted to understand what it was like to suffer, to be human all in the name of love and compassion and mercy and lovingkindness.

And, we, as God's children, become heirs to that kingdom, that way of being. God's love for us doesn't stop at knowing us, at sending Jesus, God's love goes on to inspire us to love differently, to live differently, to forgive differently, to a whole other way of being, a whole new way of seeing. God's way of loving is topsy-turvy to the way we're used to it being. It's not a love of the rich at the expense of the poor. It's becoming human in the form of a poor person, a humble person, a vulnerable person---the Christ child. With God, it's never what we'd expect. God sends his Holy Spirit, too, that we might come to know the Christ child, and in our hearts cry "Abba! Father!" as the Letter to the Galatians exclaims. As God calls out to us, knows us intimately, we cry out to God. For thousands of years humans have come to know God in Jesus, and that surely says something.

And, yet...the Christ child, born in the world, and the world came into being through God, and yet, and yet....we were clueless, we are clueless. We wander. We, sometimes arrogantly, think we know better than God. His own hometown doesn't recognize him and runs him out of town. Theologians do their best to corner the market on knowing God, but even the greatest theologians and mystics never truly know God the way Jesus knows God, as God's child, as fully human and fully divine.

I think this time of year we get closer to understanding the miracle of birth, but not just any birth, the birth of the messiah, as something wholly other. The shepherds, the lowly, poor outcasts got it. They knew this wasn't just any child, that this was the long-awaited Messiah, and they immediately went out to proclaim it.

In fact, often through the stories we have of Jesus' time on earth expressed through the gospels, it's the poor, the women, the widows, those who are blind, the orphaned, the little children--the ones viewed as the least of these by society--who seem to get it first. So, John writes his gospel in hopes that his bearing witness might help others to see the miracle of the birth of the Messiah, of the Christ child. And, we as preachers, are given the task of trying to express this love of God, this way God comes to know us through Christ, with words that always seem to fall short, with metaphors that can never quite get it, with a knowledge that seems to be always lacking.

And maybe that's okay. Maybe that's part of the draw. Maybe that's part of why we tell this story year after year. Because there's always more to know about God, about Jesus. Maybe we can get drawn into the story in different ways this year. Maybe this year will be the year. Maybe this year, as our life comes into being day by day through Christ, we'll



recognize this gift from God--his own child, Jesus--to the world. Maybe we'll see how dearly God wishes to know us. How desperately God reaches out to us, to get to know us, to get to love us, to be in an intimate relationship with us.

That is my hope for each of you. That 2021 will be the year where you're able to see how desperately in love with you, with the world God is, and reflect that same love to those whom you meet. The world could surely use more love. The days can be dark, the days can be cold, the days can be despairing, the days can make us want to give up--but Jesus is the light, Jesus is a warm fire around the hearth, Jesus is hope, Jesus, the Christ Child, is born to us, to swallow up darkness, to bring life where there's death, to show us grace and truth. May that light shine through you to the world. You are loved deeply, fully, completely, by a God who sent his only child to live among us. Pass it on to those who need to hear it, and treasure it in your hearts. **Amen.**

Prayers of the People: *A Special form for Christmas I*

As we join the whole creation and celebrate with joy the Word made flesh, let us offer prayers to God who dwells among us to the end of time.

By the wedding of the human and divine natures in Christ Jesus. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

For Michael our Presiding Bishop, Michael our Bishop, Diana our Bishop-Elect, for the clergy and deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people: of God. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

For all believers who put their trust in the incarnate Son of God. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority, and for peace and justice. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

For the conversion of the whole human race to our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

For travelers, for the sick and the suffering, for the hungry and the oppressed, for those in prison, and for the dying, especially those on our prayer list and those we remember now. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

For those who sleep in Christ, and for those whose faith is known to God alone, especially those whom we now name. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.



Remembering our most glorious and blessed Virgin Mary, St. Martin, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Celebrant

Source of grace and truth, accept the prayers we offer on this joyful feast. May we come to see the true light who shines throughout the world and who is God for all eternity. Glory to you for ever. *Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

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,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Prayer for St. Martin's

God of Love, open our eyes and ears to perceive you at work in creation, the church, and our parish. Fill our hearts with your love that we may reach out in love to others. Stir up our imagination with your Holy Spirit that we may find new ways to live into life with you. Give us a vision of your mission that we may share your love and your spirit in all the places where we work and play and worship you. In Jesus' holy name, **Amen.**

Seasonal Blessings

Dismissal

