

December 19, 2021 – 4th Sunday of Advent

Prelude

Ringling of the Bell

Opening Hymn (Instrumental) - NCH 123 - This hymn portrays Mary's many roles in fulfilling God's promise. The tune comes from 14th century Germany. "Mary, Woman of the Promise" is directly connected to today's Gospel.

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Liturgist: Before the majesty of God, we gather to worship; in quiet expectation, we come to hear God's promises.

Congregation: This is where we belong; here we are warmly greeted. Surely God will feed our deepest hunger.

Liturgist: Before God's strength and power, we bow down; in hesitant anticipation, we listen for God's judgment.

Congregation: This is our home, where our lives are redirected. Surely God will show us new ways to live.

Liturgist: Before the mercy of God, we lift our hearts; in humble imagination, we welcome a new visitation.

Congregation: This day God is present with us; we feel it. Surely God is preparing for us a time of joy.

Lighting of the Advent Candle – Missy, Audrey and Izabel Brickl

Advent Hymn (Instrumental) - NCH 106 - Also connected to the Gospel, Ruth Duck's "My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise" closes with "Our Savior comes to all who weep to wipe their tears away."

Confession of Sin

Merciful God, when we sense who you are, we are ashamed. How do you tolerate our pettiness? The abundance you have given us has made us proud more than thankful. We act as if our accomplishments were all our own doing. We seldom acknowledge your generosity or let you rule our lives. We go through the forms of worship, but we try to keep you at a safe distance. We fill our lives with status-producing activity that blocks out your call and limits our response. O God, we need to change. Will you help us? Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Gloria Patri (Instrumental)

Old Testament Lesson – Micah 5:2-5a – Micah speaks of a day when little Bethlehem, least among the clans of Judah, will be the birthplace of one who will rule over Israel. The one born will not only feed his flock in power and majesty, but will, himself, “be peace.”

Hymn of Praise (Recorded) “A Cradle Waits” by Jean Anne Shafferman, Performed by the First Choir

Children’s Sermon

Epistle Lesson – Hebrews 10:5-10 – The writer of Hebrews asserts the inefficiency of the sacrifices of “bull’s blood and goat’s blood” to take away sin, and contrasts it with the efficiency of Jesus’ self-offering.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Lord’s Prayer

Offering

Offertory - Today’s Offertory is a variation of “My Soul Gives Glory to My God.” (NCH 119) Also connected to the Gospel, the second verse says “My God has done great things for me: yes holy is God’s name. All people will declare me blessed, and blessings they shall claim.”

Doxology

Gospel Lesson – Luke 1:39-45, (46-55) Following the angel’s surprise announcement, Mary quickly heads for the hill country and Elizabeth’s house. The two kinswomen rejoice in their otherwise mysterious, even troubling, pregnancies. Elizabeth seems certain Mary’s motherhood is most blessed. And Mary exults: she sings of a God who befriends those in low places and who turns the tables on the rich and powerful.

Sermon

Closing Hymn (Instrumental) - “NCH 122” - Wesley looked to today’s reading from Micah for inspiration to write the text for “Come, O Long-Expected Jesus.” The reading foretells that Bethlehem will be the birthplace of the one who will rule over Israel.

Benediction

Postlude