



Worship for the Longest Night

December 21, 2020

***Trinity Lutheran Church
Brewster, NY 10509***

Preparation: Please have your Advent wreath and/or other candles ready to light during this time of worship. We will be lighting them as we name our grief and need for Christ's peace.

For those joining via Zoom, please mute your microphones for all those times when we are speaking in unison. We will be also be streaming live on Facebook

Topic: Blue Christmas

Time: Dec 21, 2020 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83079290091?pwd=YjZlZkxqYnBLcmc2Rmt0SmtvYkgzdz09>

Meeting ID: 830 7929 0091

Passcode: 051478

One tap mobile

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Worship for the Longest Night

Introduction: On this longest night of the year, we long for the Bethlehem star to shine upon us with peace, comfort and grace.

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP (from a prayer by Anselm of Canterbury)

We gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Jesus said, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." And so we invite each other to this time of peaceful worship. Flee for a while from your tasks;

Hide yourself for a little space from the turmoil of your thoughts.

Come, cast aside your burdensome cares and put aside your laborious pursuits.

Give your time to God, and rest in God for a little while.

NAMING OUR GRIEF

Holy and Gracious God,

You have searched us and you know us, and so you know how difficult it can be for us to be whole-hearted in our celebration of your Good News. The uncertainty of these months have overwhelmed us. Amidst the flurry of activity, we are numb. Removed from the joy that others are experiencing, we come before you, desiring Your grace to enfold us in loving compassion. Come, Emmanuel, come.

(silence for moments of personal reflection)

Holy and gracious God,

There are parts of us which will not listen to the angel's song—we believe their tidings of great joy are for some people but not for us. We grieve, God, and we hold tight to our sorrows. And so we confess, not our pain, but our embrace of it and our resistance to accept fully your grace and love.

Forgive us, God. Continue to love us, we pray, and help us finally to hear your assurance that you travel beside us, and you will help carry our burdens. Amen.

Words of hope and grace from the prophet Isaiah: *“Comfort, comfort now my people” says our God...Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. Amen*

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

On this Longest Night, we turn to God in expectant hope for the birth of our Lord, Jesus, the Light of the World. We need that Light in our lives to lift us and lead us out of the darkness of our hurt or grief or despair.

This first candle we light to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. We pause to gather up the pain of the past. We offer it to God, asking that from His hands we may receive the gift of peace.

Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

(silent reflection)

A reading from Jeremiah 29: “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future and a hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart. I will let you find me, says the Lord.

(Sing the following verse to the tune of O Come O Come Emmanuel)

O Come O Come great Lord of Light
Be with us on this longest night.
As we await your humble birth,
we cry out to you from our troubled earth:
"Restore, restore your joy which we so need
and from our sorrow let us, Lord, be freed."

This second candle we light to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice, the memory that binds them to us in this season. We speak their names aloud or in our hearts.

May God's eternal love surround them.

(silent reflection)

A reading from the Gospel of John: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many mansions. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also...I am the way, the truth and the life.”

(Sing the following verse to the tune of O Come O Come Emmanuel)

O Come Lord Jesus, brother dear,
and wipe away our every tear.
O Lord who wept when Lazarus died,
you stood by us each time we've cried.
Remain, remain, O Lord, with us this night
and keep us always in your sight.

This third candle we light to remember ourselves this Christmastime. We pause and remember these past weeks and months; the down times, the disbelief, the anger, the poignancy of reminiscing, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends, all those who stood with us. We give thanks for all the support we have known.

Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.

(silent reflection)

A reading from Ecclesiastes: “For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up what was planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek and a time to lose a time to keep and a time to throw away; a time to keep silence and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.”

(Sing the following verse to the tune of O Come O Come Emmanuel)

Sweet Baby Jesus when you were born
'twas in the dark of night before the morn.
You brought the Light that glorious day
and now with confidence we say:
"Lord Christ, you come and bring us new life.
You free us from all pain and strife."

The fourth candle we light to remember our faith and the gift of hope which the Christmas story offers to us. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

Let us remember the One who shows the way, who brings the truth, and who bears the light.

(silent reflection)

A reading from Romans 8: "What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?...For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(Sing the following verse to the tune of O Come O Come Emmanuel)

O Come Provider of our every need
and in our ready hearts plant your new seed
of strength renewed and hope restored,
and hear us sing with one accord:
"Rejoice, rejoice the Lord is near.
His grace has saved us, we have naught to fear."

GOSPEL Luke 1:68-79

The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the first chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord**

⁶⁸ "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
⁶⁹ He has raised up a mighty savior⁶⁹ for us
in the house of his servant David,
⁷⁰ as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
⁷¹ that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.
⁷² Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
⁷³ the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
⁷⁸ By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon⁷⁸ us,
⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ**

REFLECTION

APOSTLES' CREED

Let us confess our faith together in the words of the Apostles' Creed.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.**

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. 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.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for all the things we need:
For ourselves as we participate in whatever way we can this Christmastime:
God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.

For the persons we have loved that have died, for all the losses that we know, that they may be redeemed by your Easter promise:
God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.

For our family and friends, that they may know love and peace and happiness in you:
God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.

For those who have been directly affected by this pandemic: those who have lost loved ones; those who have long lasting health problems; those who have lost jobs; those who struggle as essential workers –that they may all be comforted by the hope
God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.

For all those in the medical community: nurses & doctors, researchers & local health officials, office & maintenance staff in hospitals and long care facilities; for emergency workers and aides. We pray that their tireless efforts bear witness to the gift compassion that has endured in this time.
God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.

For those we do not know, who know pain and loneliness as a constant companion, and for those who live without hope, that they may hear and receive the glad tidings of your love for them:
God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.

For the peace proclaimed by the Christmas angels, to come throughout the whole world:
God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.

~ You are encouraged to share your petitions at this time, or to offer them in silent prayer ~

God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Christ Jesus, your Son. **Amen.**

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you**

LITANY OF AFFIRMATION (“First Coming” by Madeleine L’Engle)

God did not wait till the world was ready, till nations were at peace.

God came when the Heavens were unsteady and prisoners cried out for release.

God did not wait for the perfect time.

God came when the need was deep and great. God dined with sinners in all their grime, turned water into wine.

God did not wait till hearts were pure.

In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt. To a world like ours, of anguished shame, God came and God’s Light would not go out.

God came to a world which did not mesh; to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.

In the mystery of the Word made Flesh, the maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane to raise our songs with joyful voice, or to share our grief, to touch our pain,

God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

BENEDICTION

(From Isaiah 60) *Arise, shine for you light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you...the Lord will be your everlasting light and your days of mourning shall be ended.”* **Amen**

DISMISSAL

Go in Peace. Christ is your light.

Thanks be to God.