

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay – Liturgy

<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

3rd Sunday of Advent - December 15, 2024

Call to Worship

Give thanks to God and call upon His name!

Spread the news of what God has done throughout the world.

Sing praise, and shout for joy:

Let's worship God together! [re:Worship: Advent 3 C](#)

Lighting the Candle of Joy

As we prepare for Christ's coming, we remember your calling to be filled with joy.

We come knowing that our actions can help alleviate the burdens of others.

We light the third candle of Advent, a symbol of joy that uplifts the spirit.

(Light the pink candle of joy)

May the warmth and brightness of this candle encourage us to act with compassion and courage.

Holy One, strengthen us by your Spirit to commit ourselves to being people of joy and justice.

Fill us with all joy and peace as we trust in you, so that we may overflow with hope.

Presbyterian World Service & Development Advent Liturgies 2024.

Hymn

Oh come, all ye faithful

159

1. Oh come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant;
oh come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him, born the King of angels:

Refrain

Oh come, let us adore him; oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

2. God of God, Light of light, born unto Mary,
the virgin blest, very God, begotten, not created:

Refrain

3. See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks draw nigh with holy fear;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps:

Refrain

4. Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
"Glory to God in the highest!"

Refrain

5. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;

Refrain

Words by John Francis Wade, trans. F. Oakeley. Public domain. Music: anonymous

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of joy you are our strength and our song.
You gather those who have strayed from you and welcome them back to your side.
You bring healing to those who are broken in body and spirit,
and accompany those who walk alone.
Through your great love and mercy,
you transform us all into more than we ever thought we could be.
We will trust in you and not worry or be afraid.
With joy, we sing of your glory and proclaim your saving power to those near and far
as our Creating Father, the redeeming Christ and guiding Holy Spirit.
Merciful God, in your gracious presence
we confess our sins and the sins of this world.

All knowing God,

We know perfect joy only comes through faith in you, yet we seek it elsewhere.

We worry, God. Our fears can trouble and consume us.

In search of comfort, we indulge our desires.

In search of love, we hide from our faults.

In search of approval, we spend beyond our means.

Forgive us, O God, for our worry, for seeking satisfaction in the wrong places.

**We need your comfort. We need the light of Christ to guide us and keep us
close to you. Help us turn again to you, our true source of joy. Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Third Sunday of Advent. December 15, 2024. Year C.

Assurance of Forgiveness

The scriptures say, “Don’t worry about anything, instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank God for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. God’s peace will guard your hearts and minds, as we live in Christ Jesus.”

Scripture Readings

❖ Isaiah 40:9-11

⁹Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” ¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. ¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

❖ Luke 12:29-34

²⁹And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. ³²“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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Message We Worry

Okay, you are not used to me telling jokes so I am giving you a heads up that this is one...

David had been extremely anxious for years. It got to the point where his compulsive worrying was ruining his life, so he went to a psychiatrist, who recommended that David hire a professional worrier.

After he’d been working with the specialist for a few months, David’s friend John noticed a change. “What happened?” John asked. “You don’t worry about anything anymore.”

“I hired a professional worrier!” David answered.

“That must cost a fortune,” John said.

“Yes, he charges \$3,000 a month,” David said sheepishly.

“Three thousand dollars! How can you ever afford to pay him?” John exclaimed.

“I don’t know,” David said. “That’s his problem.”¹

You may know someone who is a professional worrier. It may be you. My mom tended to worry a lot. I think because I watched her worry about things, along with a few other experiences in my life, I decided that worry was not going to take up a lot of my time and brain space. But I realize that I am not the norm. Most people I meet have tendencies to worry and even more troubling is just how prevalent anxiety is among people. It is contributing to mental health issues and the stresses we face, from financial pressures to challenges around one’s health, can be worrisome, cause anxiety, and more. So as I speak today I don’t want to have anyone think that I am minimizing concerns around mental health or downplaying the importance of caring for oneself.

¹ [Professional Worrier – Funsteria](#) Accessed December 13, 2024.

What I do want to look at is what Jesus had to say about worry and our relationship with God, because it turns out that Jesus did have something to say about it. The short passage from Luke that you heard read has the words, "...and do not keep worrying" and then "Do not be afraid," as fear contributes to our worry. But that is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of how much Jesus spoke about worry.

So let's get a little context. Jesus had been teaching the crowds and at this time has addressed a person in the crowd who said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." Of course, Jesus wasn't there to be an arbitrator in a family dispute, however it did create an opportunity for Jesus to tell a story about greed with the Parable of the Rich Fool who stored up a bunch of grain thinking he was set for years, only to be told by God that his life would end that night. From there Jesus goes on to talk about worry.

The whole passage on worry from Luke actually says,

'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

You can tell from this passage that Jesus knows that worry is a part of being human, but he goes further to say, but God's got you. Whatever your circumstance, you are not alone. God cares about you and will not abandon you. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

This image of us being part of God's flock and the care of God as a shepherd can be found elsewhere as we heard from the scripture reading from Isaiah, "11He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep." And of course, the most famous scripture of all, Psalm 23, with its opening line, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

God has compassion on and for people and there is something that changes in us when we let God take our concerns and hold them for us. God is all about freedom to live an abundant life, and when we are able to give to God our cares, then it frees us up for that life, even in difficult circumstances. Again, none of this is cut and dry. It is difficult to let

go of worry, fear, and anxiety, but one can chip away at it, letting go of one thing at a time if that is what it takes to get to a place of relying on God.

And it is not that our challenges disappear. It is not that we can sit back and do nothing, the freedom that we get when we let God do what God does allows us the energy, hope, and imagination to think about things differently. To reframe our lives and find ways to live that we may not have considered before because worry and anxiety took up the space needed to experience God and life differently. God knows what you need and will work in you if you give God the space to do so.

Often, we need help to get to that place. It may take professional such as doctors, social workers and the like to get us to think differently. But as someone who has experienced deep depression, the help of others was necessary and I would not have found my way out of the depression without that help and without medication. Yet, I also know that healing came through faith. It took all of that, professional help, medication, and my faith, God, for me to be okay. To this day it is my faith in God's hand in my life, God's provision, that helps me continue to be okay, and when needed, to have the courage to seek the help of those educated and trained to walk with me in these areas. With all that said, sometimes all it takes is the presence of a friend or trusted mentor to share in conversation.

Jesus says, "Do not worry." You know you will, but catch yourself and hold you and the situation in prayer. It is in part, why we share in the prayers of the people every Sunday. We know that God cares, has compassion, and is at work in the world. We are called to be God's hands and feet in the world, to be the light shining in someone's darkness, showing God's compassion and even sharing the words that they are valuable and loved by God.

Letting God take on our worry makes a difference, and our response to having God take that from us is to help others be released from a life of bondage to worry, anxiety, and fear. Our lives become a witness to what God is doing in the world. Thanks be to God that we are loved by God, the compassion of God so broad that God sent Jesus in the form of a helpless child who grew in strength and power to set us free through the cross and resurrection. The resurrection setting the stage for all to have life and life abundant and the freedom to let God move and live in and through us. This is the story of Jesus that began with the Christmas story but continues with us here and now in and through the power of the Holy Spirit walking among us, taking our cares, taking our worry, taking our fear, and giving us life. Amen.

Prayers of the People

O God, our Strength and Salvation,
we come to you with joy and thanksgiving
as the beauty of this season unfolds.
With the kindness of your Spirit,
awaken opportunities for understanding to emerge among those who have differed,

and refresh our community and congregation with joyful anticipation that your gift to us in Christ can change everything.

Generous God,
Send joy to the world again.

Tender God,
We delight in the joy you bring into our lives and neighbourhoods through our life together in Christ, and through the love of family and friends. These gifts have sustained us through stressful times and we thank you.

We pray for those facing illness in spirit, mind, or body, and those waiting for diagnosis or treatment, as anxiety grows.

We pray for those who are lonely or in mourning, and all who have been touched by tragedy and violence.

We pray for those searching for work, struggling with rising costs, worried deeply about their security.

And we pray for those working to bring justice to the discouraged and defeated, and those doing their best to care for the earth you love, despite the challenges.

Use us to bring to joy to others through our friendship, generosity and understanding.

Generous God,
Send joy to the world again.

We offer our prayers in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our hope, our peace, and our joy, who taught us to pray these words together:

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Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen

Invitation to the offering

We make our offering today with joyful hearts, anticipating our celebration of God's gift to us in Christ Jesus. Know that our gifts may touch lives in deep need this season with the joy we have received in Jesus' name.

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We gather our gifts together and present them as an offering of gratitude and praise. St. Andrew's uses the donations that we receive to support the ministry of God from this church and in community. Your gifts make a difference and this includes the ministry of online worship as well. If you are able to make a one-time donation or

support this ministry on an ongoing basis your gift makes an impact. Please check us out at standrewpres-tbay.ca. There you can find various ways of giving from e-transfer to the online donate button that allows you to give by credit card. We are deeply grateful for your generosity

Hymn

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

115

1. Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
great David's greater Son;
hail, in the time appointed,
his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
to set the captive free,
to take away transgression,
and rule in equity.
2. He brings salvation speedy
to those who suffer wrong;
he saves the poor and needy,
and helps the weak be strong;
they sing who once were sighing,
their darkness turned to light,
for they, who once were dying,
are precious in his sight.
3. He shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth,
and love, joy, hope, like flowers,
spring in his path to birth.
Before him on the mountains
shall peace, the herald, go,
and righteousness, in fountains,
from hill to valley flow.
4. All powers shall bow before him,
and gold and incense bring;
all nations shall adore him,
his praise all people sing,
for he shall have domination
o'er river, sea and shore,
far as the eagle's pinion
or dove's light wing can soar.
5. O'er every foe victorious,
Christ on his throne shall rest,
from age to age more glorious,
all-blessing and all blest:
the tide of time shall never
his covenant remove;
his name shall stand forever—
that name to us is Love.

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Benediction

Go now and rejoice in the Lord always.
Do not be afraid or worried about anything,
but in everything trust God and pray.
Bear fruits worthy of repentance,
sharing what you have and being gentle with all.

And may God rejoice over you with gladness;
May Christ Jesus renew you in his love;
and may the Holy Spirit give you peace beyond understanding
to guard your hearts and minds in Christ.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. ~ Copyright © 2000 Nathan Nettleton www.laughingbird.net