

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on this second Sunday of Advent.

Announcements

HYMN Praise God #306

CALL TO WORSHIP insert

Prayer of Adoration and Confession [Responsive] God of purpose and promise, you demonstrate your love creation with your faithful care, like shepherds tend to their sheep. You set pathways for us to follow, clearing the way in the wilderness of the world. We turn from you to pursue our own purpose. Still, you call us back. You call us by name in our baptisms. You set us in the world to serve you, each person with a purpose designed by you. And so, we come to worship you, O God, knowing that in you, we will find our true purpose with the path that leads to peace and well-being.

By the power of your Holy Spirit, open our eyes for seeing and ears for hearing so that we follow Jesus more faithfully day by day. Amen

Assurance of Pardon Friends, trust that peace and forgiveness are God's gift to. Receive the renewing power of the Holy Spirit and be at peace with God, with yourselves, and with each other. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn Hope is a star [v 1-2] #119

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination and Scripture God of grace, by your Spirit, create a space within us to receive your wisdom, your mercy, and your invitation to live for you. Your Word, O God, comes to us in the translation of ancient scripture. Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds with understanding and our hearts with wisdom in the name of Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

Scripture

Tanakh*	Isaiah 40:1-11	[B#667/W#740]
Psalms	Psalms 85:8-13	[B#543/W#601]
Epistle	2 Peter 3:8-15a	[B#238/W#257]
Gospel	Mark 1:1-8	[B#34 /W#35]

May God bless our understanding of this, God's holy word. **The word of the Lord.**

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O holy One, by the power of your Holy Spirit at work in the word read and proclaimed, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen.

We are in the midst of advent, preparing to celebrate the good news of the birth of Christ. The prophet Isaiah announced good news: God comforts an exiled people in preparation for their journey home. Mark's Gospel announced the good news of God in Jesus Christ: God comes to turn the world right side up and baptize us with the Holy Spirit. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Messiah it is a particularly good time to focus on the good news in your life. Advent allows a space to focus on the past, present, and time to come.

Last week as we shared communion we were reminded of Christ in everyday elements of bread and wine; of God's presence within our relationships; and in the many ways the Holy Spirit guides us as we interact in the world. The scripture today encourages us to be particularly attentive to the presence of God. Consider how the Spirit of God moving within you, around you. Consider how God calls to you.

On this second Sunday of Advent we pause to reflect on those who proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ, those who prophesied to prepare people for the new beginning. The disciple Mark reminds the reader to be mindful of the past. We look to the Jewish roots of the Christian faith to better understand the connection between what Malachi and Isaiah foretold coupled with the prophetic voice of John the Baptist.

In his commentary John A. Stroman shared, "Tom Long asks the question ... "Have you ever noticed where God placed his treasure on this earth?" The treasure is not gold, but gospel. Not silver, but good news. Not hard, cold cash, but grace, love, and peace. He points out that God could have left it with the politicians, those who are responsible for collecting taxes, building schools, and passing laws, but God didn't. God could have left this treasure with Zechariah, the high priest, but his unbelief took him out of the picture. Tom Long states that God left the treasure in the least likely of places: in the love, care, and nurture of a first century peasant woman chosen as the "handmaiden of the Lord." God's treasure was left with the most powerless figure in the ancient world. Doesn't that tell you something about God's grace in today's world?"

Different voices rise up with the same message out of the scriptures. Isaiah said it. Malachi said it. John the Baptist said it. The final voice at the end of the Old Testament was that of the prophet Malachi and he gave the people a promise. It was a promise of the coming Messiah. Malachi wrote, "I will send the prophet Elijah to you . . ." The prophet Elijah wore a cloak made from camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist."¹ Mark is brief in his writing. This shortest gospel starts with, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" When Mark proclaimed the life of Christ, he begins with the prophetic voices who foretold of his arrival. John the Baptist shared the good news to prepare the way for Jesus. John does this with the early prophetic teachings from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Malachi, and others. There is a joy-filled urgency in John's message. An urgency to share the good news, to tell of the Messiah that was proclaimed by Isaiah. An urgency to make straight paths for him.

Mark wrote during the first century when Jews were in a form of exile as they lived under the oppressive Roman occupation. Although they lived in their familiar communities, their lives were controlled by the Roman military. John, who was about the same age as Jesus, lived out in the rugged Judean desert on wild honey and locust. In a society that relied heavily on the hierarchy of power and wealth, John held not respect for either. He cried out to the people from the wilderness. He was a preacher who baptized with water in the Jordan river, calling to all who would listen ... he called out in the country and the cities as he told of the messiah's arrival. He urged people to confess, repent, and be baptized. Several of the disciples drawn to John thought he was the long-expected Messiah. John pointed out "There was a man sent from God whose name was John, He came for testimony to bear witness to the light that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but he came to bear witness to the light.

He challenged people to reconsider the choices they were making and to seek repentance -to turn around and go toward the ways of the Messiah. He called on everyone, particularly the powerful, to repent. This one man drew the attention of the people and the authorities with his message.

In his commentary, Samuel Massey wrote, "I am told that in Minnesota you can step across the headwaters of the Mississippi River. It is no more than a tiny stream. It is

¹ <https://sermons.com/sermon/john-the-baptist-and-mrs.-nolan/2237803>

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Resources include: PCC Worship Planner, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/> Feasting on the Word, NRSV Bible, sermons.com

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amazing to me that a river so mighty can begin in such an inconspicuous way. Perhaps we have a similar experience as we read the first chapter to the Gospel of Mark. The message of Christ has raised up nations and brought them low, launched and defeated armies, started large social movements and destroyed others. Think of all that has been done in the name of Jesus Christ and how inconspicuously the Gospel begins according to Mark.” The gospels provide four versions of time spent with Jesus. In some ways, the biblical stories remind me of gathering with family and sharing our common stories. Each of us understand the same event from different perspectives. Each of us holds onto information, emotions, and memories in unique ways. Each of us will share our stories differently. When we encounter different versions of the stories we are able to better understand each other and the impact within our lives.

Glenn Pease wrote, “The painter Ludwig Richter, tells in his memoirs of how he and three friends set out to paint the same landscape. They each were committed to produce as accurately as possible what they saw. Nevertheless, the result was four different pictures, as different as the four personalities of the artists. The same thing happened when four well-known artists painted the portrait of the United Nations hostess, Maria Lani. Each of them knew her personally and saw her from a different perspective, and the result was four remarkably different pictures. This helps us understand why there are four Gospels in the New Testament. One Gospel would give us the life of Jesus as seen from only one perspective, and that would mean a very inadequate portrait. Jesus is too complex to be seen from only one perspective. God inspired four men to write the life of Jesus, for each of them gives us unique insight into Jesus that you do not get in the others. Mark gives us the perspective that is most popular in our modern world. Wycliff Bible Translators have made Mark the most translated book in the world. There is no other book in the world in so many different languages. It is the shortest of the Gospels, and, therefore, the fastest to translate and to read.”

In closing, the scriptures remind us to be mindful of God’s call on your life. During this advent season live out your faith with one another in new and different ways. Be attentive to the Spirit nudging you. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn

Keep Christ in Christmas

Insert

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote

This Sunday in Advent celebrates God's gift of peace. When we look around the world, we see so many places where peace is missing, in neighborhoods and nations. But because we know the gift of God's peace, we can trust that our gifts will help restore true peace to souls and situations by the power of the Spirit.

Doxology

Blessing of Gifts

God of promise, we offer our gifts in Jesus' name, for we know peace through his forgiveness and faithfulness. Bless our gifts and our lives. Help us share the peace you offer with lives that touch ours throughout the world you love. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God in whom we live and move and have our being: as we gather our thoughts in prayer, we are aware of many challenges – in our own lives, in the lives of those we care about, and in the world around us. We pray for all who cry out to you in the face of overwhelming odds. We pray for those who are suffering in our community, remembering those who are ill; those who are bereaved; those who struggle with poverty or unemployment; and all who face barriers through discrimination or disability.

We pray for those who are waiting ... for a birth or a death, for diagnosis or treatment, for important news or a new opportunity.

We pray for all who struggle with their faith and those who have given up on you because of actions taken in your name that betrayed your love.

Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Hear our prayers. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with challenges: Jim T; Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; Lori and family; and, Don, Phyllis, and Shawn; Roy & family; and, Tatjana & family. We lift up all who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges.

O God of hope and new possibility, in Christ you opened the way into the future for us through the power of your redeeming love. Give us the courage we need to face our future, assured of your presence and power to sustain us. We pray for our church and for

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each other. May our life together offer the healing peace of Christ in our community and in our homes. Open our hearts to new possibilities for ministry as we pray together the words Christ taught us: Our Father who art in heaven, hallow'ed 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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn

Hymn

Go tell it on the mountain

#133

To Go Forth In God's Name

Commissioning and Benediction

Go in peace. Be ready to bear fruit worthy of your commitment to Jesus Christ and his teachings of justice and peace. May God fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Postlude

Amen