

Order of Worship for at Home Use

December 13, 2020

3rd Week of Advent

Welcome to worship with Grace@Home!

We pray that you are healthy and well as you worship this week.

If you wish to worship via the video, click this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_eMjVfTmoY

May God's peace fill Your heart and mind as we enter, with intention, into our time of worship this week. For the four weeks before Christmas, in the darkest part of the year, we wait with expectation for the Messiah. The word "Advent" means coming or arrival, and it marks the birth of Jesus. We choose to wait with those that have come before - with anticipation, groaning, longing, hope and dreaming.

This year in Advent we will be invited into an expectant waiting during which we will intentionally enter into a spiritual discipline of dreaming. In troubled times it is common to focus on all that is difficult, heartbreaking and fear producing...however, our God is calling us not to see the darkness around us, but to see Immanuel... God with us... and find the light and life and hope and joy and peace and love that is found in Him. Therefore, we dare to dream.

Again this week you are encouraged to find a place where you can center your heart and mind on Christ, you might light a candle, your advent wreath, enjoy the glow of your Christmas lights, and bring your bible as together we take a deep breath and join together in worship.

Let us worship God!

With God's love,

Pastor Dana

We Gather as God's Family to Worship

Prelude

“Mary Did You Know?”

arr. J. Raney

Becky Aldridge & Dr. David Dorway

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--kG81bejuk>

Welcome/Call to Worship/Advent Wreath

Pastor Jim Houston-Hencken

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7bAd2s-djk>

I dream of dance parties in the kitchen.

I dream of laughter that is contagious.

I dream of birthday candles and another beautiful year.

I dream of family game nights and dinner parties with friends.

I dream of homemade costumes and family recipes.

I dream of pillow forts, fireflies, and front porch swings.

I dream of every little thing that brings joy; and I know it comes from
God.

Today we light the candle of joy as a reminder that God's dream for
this world involves the end of all tears.

God's dream for this world involves a joy that overflows and is
contagious.

So may this fire burn bright, and as it does, may we sing with joy.

May we dance.

May we laugh.

May we hold onto the people we love.

May we sow joy in a hurting world, and may it be an act of holy grace.

Hymn

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

Dr. Lisa Elliott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8eDjkNnYEI>

Sharing the Peace of Christ

not in video

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you...

and also with you.

In this time of social distancing it is important for us to remember that in Christ we are connected to all who believe in Jesus in every time and place. As the world continues to be isolated, and many are feeling anxious, as Christians we share the peace of Christ as a way to offer hope and the joy of Christ. Again today we use the familiar words, “The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you... and also with you.”

Now, or after your time of worship, reach out via text, email, phone or video call, to someone outside of your home extending the invitation to enter into the peace of Christ with our faith community.

Praise God, that His peace is with us, always!

Prayer and The Lord's Prayer

Pastor Jim Houston-Hencken

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjoZz2awqnE>

O Great God,

With a sky full of stars and a world full of flowers, there should be no end to our joy. And yet, instead of decorating our lives with joy, we let it slip away like loose change. Instead of singing like Mary, or dancing like David, we pass by remarkable beauty and love most days, unfazed. Forgive us. Teach us the ways of children, who laugh and dance and sing as if joy is the very thing that keeps us alive.

On this Sunday of joy, we ask that you will renew our joy and bring your glory and goodness to the world once again this Christmas season. We are sick, we are hurting, we are locked down, quarantined and frightened. Renew our joy. Bless those who are sick with healing. Provide opportunity and resources for those in need. Create in us generous and joyful hearts.

This Christmas season, create for us new traditions of service for those in need, gratefulness for those who serve us, gratitude for those who love us and joy for all who need it.

We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who brings Joy to the world and taught us to pray saying:

**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 debts, As we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.**

Amen.

We Listen to God's Word

Hymn/Praise

“Jesus Loves Me”

not in video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C63z5hCd7bc>

Children's Message

Pastor Dana Pope

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BaBjhIyfueQ>

Special Music

“Angels We Have Heard on High” arr. J. Krug

Kathy Koch & Savannah Scarlett

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBoaZG7ertQ>

Reading of the Word

Luke 1:46-55

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4XvlgW2oqw>

⁴⁶ And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

Message

“Dreamers...Sow Joy”

Pastor Dana Pope

We begin today, as those who dream...thinking about Dreaming as a spiritual discipline, we focus on the idea that Dreamers are called to Sow Joy... my first question is: what do you notice about those who are joyful? Are you joyful?

Joyful people are, as I notice, people who have a good sense of humor, who laugh and smile easily, they are easy to be around, they dance, play, sing, and aren't afraid to have fun!

At this time of year, when our focus is so much on gifts, giving and receiving... It is easy to think, if I just had that new...phone, book, car, refrigerator, xbox or Barbie doll... then I would be happy. We tend to mix up the ideas of being purposeful or successful, content, and most often, just being happy – with joy...while these things are good... they are not joy.

What is the distinction between happiness and joy?

The word HAPPINESS, comes from the Middle English word hap, which means "chance" or "coincidence" (as in hap-penstance or hap-hazard), and it has everything to do with the condition of outward circumstances.

The word JOY is from the Greek concept of chara, which means "calm, inner gladness, delight & rejoicing, contentment regardless of circumstance," & it has its root in charis, which means grace.

Joy in the NT is used to indicate a feeling of happiness that is based on a spiritual (deeper) reality of God's presence – independent of what is happening.

There is a lot happening right now which could steal our happiness. And even the happiest people may feel less-than-happy this year...in our current circumstances.

There is so much to be frustrated with, disappointed about, so much pain and suffering as the case numbers increase and Christmas draws near without our usual traditions, festivities and family gatherings, and all the rest.

Therefore, if happiness is circumstantial... and joy is not... the question becomes: ARE WE, those who dream, joyful?

There's a story told about a man from Louisville, Kentucky, who had to travel to St. Louis on business. This was years ago... when Christians still kept Sunday as a very special day.

For this man, "keeping the Sabbath" meant not riding the trains on Sunday. So, after he finished up his business late Saturday night, he had to stay over in St. Louis until the following Monday morning.

On Sunday morning, he left the hotel looking for a place to worship. The streets were quite deserted, but finally he saw a policeman and asked him for directions to the nearest Protestant church.

The stranger thanked the policeman for the information and was about to walk off when he turned and asked the policeman: "Why have you recommended that particular church? There must be several churches nearby that you could have recommended."

The policeman smiled and replied: "I'm not a church man myself, but the people who come out of that church are the most joyful looking church people in St. Louis. I thought that would be the kind of church you would like to attend"

I believe that joy is something that is in us by virtue of our life in Christ. It is a gift. Therefore, it can be taken care of, nourished and grown in us... as we attend to the presence of God. If we could become a people whose joy is contagious, there would never be an empty seat as we worship together!

What if we looked at Joy as one of our most precious gifts... a gift that will benefit our own souls, and the world... but also a gift to be intentional about...to practice.

It is common for us to let ourselves off the hook and buy into the idea that people can be born more – or less – joyful, and you get what you get. That due to genetics, temperament, enneagram number or Myers Briggs type indicator...or even early life experiences...some people have more joy...and it is what it is... you have it or you don't. Martyn Lloyd-Jones seems to be on to something when he says that no matter your definition of joy, the only true definition is the one found in the New Testament... so, once again, as we turn to scripture, and we learn that what we think is the truth, is only a glimmer of God's truth...of God's dreaming for us.

What if God's dreaming for us includes joy...and the things that bring joy...in our lives. Barbara Brown Taylor once wrote (Surprised by Joy) that, "The only condition for joy is the presence of God. Joy happens when God is present and people know it, which means that it can erupt in a depressed economy, in the middle of a war, [or even] in an intensive care waiting room."

We could add in the midst of pandemic, job loss, separation/quarantine and in our anything-but-normal times... Happiness is fleeting... success is conditional on our abilities and strengths...contentment is somewhat about control. Joy is about our proximity and awareness of God...and dreaming His dreams.

Today, as we turn to the gospel of Luke and we enter into the story of Mary and her cousin Elizabeth.

Mary has had a visit from the Angel Gabriel – told that she was highly favored and that she will have a child and name Him Jesus. She then went to the town of Judea and stayed with her cousin. The two greeted one another and when the baby in Elizabeth's womb heard Mary's greeting, John leaped for joy and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Mary then sings her song of joy.

We don't know Mary as a little girl. We don't know how joyful her disposition was... but we do see her choice of words put into song. *My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...* what we see is gratitude. A counting of her blessings. Acknowledgment of God's work in her and in the world. What we see is a discipline of JOY...deeply rooted.

Wow – we need Mary and her song this year.

Mary is such a great reminder for us, isn't she? A teenager, unmarried, pregnant... most likely fearful and somewhat hesitant – not knowing what - exactly - was coming her way, yet also... and primarily...dreaming of what God said would be.

Looking with expectation and hope for what God was doing...seeing with the eyes of faith both the world around her and her own circumstance. She was not happy. She was joyful.

She is a model of trust and of joy...and the joy she feels... it bubbles up and out of her with these familiar words of the Magnificat.

What is the key to being dreamers who sow joy?

How do we proceed? How do we obtain this deep-rooted joy of Mary?

Mary, surrenders to God's dreams... with a simple "YES" steps into the dream that God dreamed to bring about salvation for all people... and that brings joy.

Surrender is a good place to start... being close to God and hearing His voice and then doing the thing that he has put in front of us to do... surrendering to God's will feels big!

I believe that dreaming God's dreams takes discipline,

What if...surrendering to God's will - in this part of our walk with Him –

in the discipline of JOY...calls us to surrender to things that don't seem important to us, but are in fact very important to God?

I heard a story about a father who had set aside the afternoon to play with his young son. Nathan, the father, was armed with ideas...what do you want to do?

Watch a Movie? Go to the Park?

"No, I just want to play"

Uh... how about...a bike ride...

No dad... I just want to play.

Nathan finally confessed, son, I don't really know how to play. I don't do that. Adults don't really play...

His son looked at him with tears in his eye... dad... I don't ever want to forget how to play!

Have we forgotten the actions of joy? Playing, joining in God's dance and beauty?

Someone said, these days we know how to drink whiskey and go to the movies, but we have forgotten how to celebrate and show joy.

Celebration. Play. Dancing. Singing like Mary. Laughing. Coloring or painting. Playing golf. Creating something. Sitting by a fire...all of these things are the practice of joy.

Paying attention to God's Presence is what Spiritual Disciplines are all about

Richard Foster in A Celebration of Discipline says: "A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is provide the right conditions for the growing of grain. He cultivates the ground, he plants the seed, he waters the plants, and then the natural forces of the earth take over and up comes the grain...This is the way it is with the Spiritual Disciplines - they are a way of sowing to the Spirit... By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done."

We are called to a discipline of attending to God's presence...plant seeds and provide the right conditions...for JOY to bubble up.

What if we practiced joy... we put ourselves in a position, regularly, not just once a week, but daily – hourly – to dream God's dreams and experience the Joy of His presence, so that we can participate in the work that He is doing.

What if we took up singing, celebrating, laughing, dancing... dreaming out loud with others as a way to practice a discipline of Joy? Would we feel silly? Maybe...

And it might take work – but wouldn't JOY be worth the effort?

Emily Heath in joy as resistance says this: here's what I think. I think it is easy to be joyless in this world. It's simple. It doesn't take much effort. You can put others down. You can dwell in hopelessness. You can even lob out negative comments on the internet from the comfort of your own home. The best part is that if you lack joy, you don't even have to do anything constructive. You can just dwell on it. But it's a whole lot harder to rejoice. Why? Because joy is hard. Now that may sound like an oxymoron. Joy is joy. Shouldn't joy be easy? I don't think so. Because I think joy is something deeper than that. But that also means that it is rooted. And it's the thing that remains in you even when everything else around you is crumbling down.

Friends, we are called in the melody of Mary's song into the joy of surrendering to God's will for us... becoming those who dream God's dreams... so in the days ahead let us work together to be a people of joy. And practice sowing joy in our lives, in the life of our families far and near, and in the world.

Amen.

We Respond to the Voice of God

Presentation of our Tithes & Offerings

Pastor Jim Houston-Hencken

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1f50WuYhzTo>

We are blessed with many opportunities to give of our time talents as well as our resources...this is not about funding the church or fundraising; it is an act of worship. We respond to God's Word, His love for us, and His mercy by giving of ourselves. We give all sorts of things, including our hearts, our finances, our time and our gifts. Let us now participate in God's kingdom by returning God's tithes and our offerings to the church via mail or online giving, using text to give or the following link: <https://onrealm.org/gracepclv/-/give/now>

Offertory

“Still, Still, Still” arr. N. Luboff

Quartet

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ln_o2NIM6zo

Offertory Prayer

Pastor Jim Houston-Hencken

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUvrNFQZzNc>

Holy God, bless us as we offer these, your tithes and our offerings, put Your almighty hand upon us and grant us opportunities to share the riches of Your love with those around us. Bless the world and Your kingdom with Your love and by our hand and, Holy One, grant that we might be truly grateful for all that we hold in Jesus name. Amen.

We Go with God to Love and Serve

Closing Hymn
Shane

“Do You Hear What I Hear?”

N. Regney & P.

Praise Team

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wp2WznuMxs>

Benediction

Pastor Dana Pope

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xigDidqipDc>

Postlude

“Cold December Flies Away”

arr. M. Corl

Dr. David Dorway, Organist

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pu56P-FzOE8>

Acknowledgements

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHUVQMHzHI>

**As you continue to worship this week, please keep the following people
in prayer, and reach out to one another in word or deed.**

In Need of Prayer

Dolores Harris (Merrill Gardens)
Alice Black (Skilled Nursing at Las Ventanas)

Judy Aitken, Becky Aldridge, Fred & Mickie Bratschie, Bernard Buswell,
Bill Carlston, Bob & Joan Clark, Tanner Cordon, Carol Daniel, Ann Donithan,
Rosamaria Duenas, Jill and Robert Eaton, Pennie Everhart, Joice Franklin,
Mary Gafford, Terry Glaser, Charlene Harper, Greta Hougnon, Pam Kodey,
Lara Kolberg, Dorell Koon, Carole McKinnis, Sherrie Miles, Maggie O'Donnell,
Alice Oiler, Dodi Palmer, Taylor Palmer, Mary Phillips, Russ & Pat Reid,
Aminta & Jorge Santanilla, Bruce Simon, Marty Swartout, Nick Vogelzang,
Mike Walsh, and Dick Wohletz

In Memoriam:

Jack Crockett 3/18/2020
Randy Innis 3/18/2020
Clark Trapp 3/18/2020
Ruthy Stull 3/19/2020
Ted Phillips 4/1/2020
Violet Cross 4/4/2020
Bill Franklin 5/4/2020
Greg Holt 5/7/2020
Carol Mohr 5/25/2020
Priscilla Taylor 7/4/2020
Louis Romero 8/8/2020
Bettye Hodgkins 8/11/2020
Gary Oiler 8/23/2020
Donna Gibson 9/14/2020
Audrey Mitchell 12/1/2020