



November 29, 2020
First Sunday of Advent
Holy Communion

Stir up your power, and come! The psalmist's plea in Psalm 80:2 has become familiar to us in the Advent prayers. Isaiah wants God to rip the heavens open. Both cry out for an apparently distant, angry God to show up, to save, to restore. When we hear Jesus describing the

coming of the Son of Man with stars falling from heaven, it can sound dire and horrible, not like anything we would ever hope for. But when we really look at the suffering of people God loves, we can share the hope that God would tear open the heavens and come.

WELCOME! We are glad to have you join us in worship today. Here are a few notes to help you feel more at home participating in our worship.

Worshipping. Today's service is printed in this bulletin. Parts in bold indicate responses by everyone in which you are invited to participate.

Adjustments to our service. In order to comply with safety and social distancing guidelines, it will be mandatory that everyone have a face covering and everyone must be mindful of keeping their distance from others. Please refrain from mingling in confined spaces before and/or after service.

Other adjustments are:

- Congregational singing is discouraged. If you feel you must, please sing softly with your mask in place.
- The sign of the PEACE will be offered by a wave or bow while staying in place.
- The OFFERING PLATE will not be passed or brought forward. It will be in the back of the sanctuary instead.
- If this is a service of HOLY COMMUNION, communion elements will be available as you exit the sanctuary.
- At the conclusion of the service, everyone is asked to remain in their pew. Ushers will dismiss people by row to maintain safe spacing.
- The Sanctuary, Narthex and Broadway lobby are the only areas open. All other areas of St. Stephen's are closed.

Prayer Requests. Please call the office if you'd like to place someone on our prayer list.

+ GATHERING +
The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

We Gather in Quiet

During the Advent season, our services begin in silence. In this season, the world around us is often busy and speeding up. So in this church season of waiting, hoping, and longing, we invite you to slow down. We encourage you to sit in silence or to pray silently in our sanctuary until the service begins. We do ask that you refrain from talking in the sanctuary. When the worship leaders enter, we will have a collective time of silence together.

COME AND FIND THE QUIET CENTER

All are invited to listen.

Sung to the tune of "Lord Whose Love in Humble Service" (ELW 712)

*Come and find the quiet center,
in the crowded life we lead.
Find the room for hope to enter,
find the frame where we are freed.
Clear the chaos and the clutter,
clear our eyes that we may see
all the things that really matter,
be at peace and simply be.*

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

C Amen.

P Together let us honestly and humbly confess
that we have not lived as God desires.

Silence is kept for reflection.

**C Loving and forgiving God,
we confess that we are held captive by sin.
In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray.
We have not welcomed the stranger;
we have not loved our neighbor;
we have not been Christ to one another.**

**Restore us, O God.
Wake us up and turn us from our sin.
Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.**

P People of God, hear this glad news:
by God's endless grace
your sins are forgiven, and you are free—
free from all that holds you back
and free to live in the peaceable realm of God.
May you be strengthened in God's love,
✠ comforted by Christ's peace,
and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

GATHERING SONG: *The King Shall Come* (ELW 260)
All are invited to listen

*The King shall come when morning dawns
and light triumphant breaks,
when beauty gilds the eastern hills
and life to joy awakes.*

GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
C And also with you.

CALL TO WORSHIP

P Lord Jesus Christ, we await your coming,
We wait filled with hope,
C Knowing your light will shine in the darkness.
P We wait anticipating your peace,
C Believing that one day it will fill our world.
P We wait embracing your love,
C May we reach out to share it with our neighbours.
P We wait with joy,
C Bubbling us in expectation of your birth.
P Lord we wait,
C Come soon and fill us with your life.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

We pray together and listen as the wreath is lit.

P We praise you, O God, for this evergreen crown
that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent.
As we light the first candle on this wreath,
rouse us from sleep, that we may be ready to greet our Lord
when he comes with all the saints and angels.
Enlighten us with your grace,
and prepare our hearts to welcome him with joy.
Grant this through Christ our Lord,
whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.
C **Amen.**

Light the first candle.

SONG: *Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah* (ELW 240)

*Light one candle to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
He shall bring salvation to Israel,
God fulfills the promise.*

+ WORD +

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 64:1-9

This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

A reading from Isaiah.

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
²as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

⁴From ages past no one has heard,
 no ear has perceived,
 no eye has seen any God besides you,
 who works for those who wait for him.
⁵You meet those who gladly do right,
 those who remember you in your ways.
 But you were angry, and we sinned;
 because you hid yourself we transgressed.
⁶We have all become like one who is unclean,
 and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
 We all fade like a leaf,
 and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
⁷There is no one who calls on your name,
 or attempts to take hold of you;
 for you have hidden your face from us,
 and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
 we are the clay, and you are our potter;
 we are all the work of your hand.
⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
 and do not remember iniquity forever.
 Now consider, we are all your people.
 ...The word of the Lord. **C Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: PSALM 80:1-7, 17-19

*The psalm for the day is read responsively. The lector will read the plain text and all are invited to read the text in **bold**.*

¹Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph | like a flock;
 shine forth, you that are enthroned up- | on the cherubim.
²**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, | and Manasseh,**
stir up your strength and | come to help us.
³Restore | us, O God;
 let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.
⁴**O LORD| God of hosts,**
how long will your anger fume when your | people pray?
⁵You have fed them with the | bread of tears;
 you have given them bowls of | tears to drink.
⁶**You have made us the derision | of our neighbors,**
and our enemies laugh | us to scorn.

⁷Restore us, O | God of hosts;

let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.

¹⁷**Let your hand be upon the one at | your right hand,
the one you have made so strong | for yourself.**

¹⁸And so will we never turn a- | way from you;
give us life, that we may call up- | on your name.

¹⁹**Restore us, O LORD | God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

...The word of the Lord. **C Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL: Mark 13:24-37

Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

P The holy gospel according to Mark.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] ²⁴“In those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light,

²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory.

²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”
...The gospel of the Lord. **C Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: *Have Thine Own Way, Lord* (TFF 152)

All are invited to stand and listen as the Word of God is proclaimed in song.

*Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way.
Thou art the potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after thy will,
while I am waiting, yielded and still.*

APOSTLES' CREED

A With the whole Church, we confess our faith:

**C I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come 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 INTERCESSION

A God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

A We pray for the ministry we share in Christ's name. Open our hearts to your call for justice, peace, and healing. Attune us to the needs of the world as you draw near. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A We pray for this planet in need of restoration: for devastated habitats, polluted waters, thawing ice, blazing fires, swelling floods, and long-lasting droughts. Renew the face of the earth and our relationship to it. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A We pray for all people who care for others in our community and around the world. Fill them with compassion and the power to respond with justice for those who are oppressed, with welcome for those who are excluded, and with relief for those who suffer. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A We pray for people who are in crisis as the seasons change: for those without homes facing severe weather, for those who are unemployed or underemployed, and for those in poverty or facing food insecurity. Relieve their burdens, sustain their bodies, and ease their minds. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A We pray for the people in our families and congregation who live with depression, anxiety, chronic pain, addiction, and other invisible illnesses. We pray especially for Perry and those we now name a loud or in the silence of our hearts...*brief silence*... Ease their suffering and support them when they struggle. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

PEACE

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C **And also with you.**

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace with a wave or bow while staying in place.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE: *The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns*

+ MEAL +

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,
who preached good news to the poor,
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out your Holy Spirit,
that by this Holy Communion we may know
the unity we share with all your people
in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

C Amen

LORD'S PRAYER

P Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**C 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 trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Communion will be distributed at the conclusion of our worship service as you exit the sanctuary. After the presiding minister hands you the wafer, take one individual cup of wine or juice, partake of communion and dispose of the used cup.

+ SENDING +

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

P The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting,
the long-expected Savior fill you with love,
the unexpected Spirit guide your journey,
✠ now and forever.

C Amen.

SENDING SONG: *Christ, Be Our Light* (ELW 715)

All are invited to listen.

*Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.*

Refrain

Christ, be our light!

Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in your church gathered today.

DISMISSAL

A Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE: Canticle of the Turning - verse 1

Learn from the Figs

Fig trees mature slowly. They don't require much maintenance, but they do require plenty of time to grow. Some fig trees take years to start producing fruit. It may be tempting to give up on a fig too soon, but the patient gardener knows to wait and watch for the subtle signs that the fig tree is about to produce.

"From the fig tree learn its lesson," Jesus says in today's gospel (Mark 13:28). Just as the gardener watches for indications that a bud is about to unfold, so should believers watch for where God's presence is emerging in the world.

Jesus' words in this passage paint a picture of God's arrival as unsettling and fearsome, with darkening skies and shaking celestial orbs. It is hard to imagine how anyone could miss such an arrival, yet Jesus warns his listeners that those who are not vigilant will be caught unaware. We must watch with care and patience for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man, like the gardener who watches for the ripening fig. If you think such signs can be ignored, you will miss the surprising, gentle cry of the incarnate God come as a tiny, vulnerable baby.

Today, at the beginning of Advent, we enter a season of waiting and watching as we anticipate with hope the coming of Christ's light into the world. Yet, even as we wait, there are active signs of God's presence all around us now—in water and word, in bread and wine, in the assembly gathered for worship. These signs remind us of God's gracious love toward us. At the same time, the lesson of the fig tree reminds us to stay curious and attentive, open to what might surprise us. God is always up to something new.

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<http://godspace.wordpress.com.2012/12/07prayers-for-the-journey-advent-prayers-for-the-week/>.
Eucharistic Prayer from With Once Voice.