



Lake Toxarway United Methodist Church
Sunday, December 13th, 2020

Dear Lake Toxaway family and community,

Last week I wrote about seeing the mess and cleaning it up. And this week, I write about decorating. We need to make the place look great for the One who is coming and for the persons Christ came to find, to heal, to love, to forgive and to redeem in the ever open and expanding community He created.

For many people, this year of 2020 has been a time of desperation, loneliness, disappointment, anxiety, and uncertainty. While some of us may have been isolated from some of these challenges, we all have felt the challenges of separation. Isaiah understood desperation and separation. This book in the Bible has at least two tones: the first half refers to a time when things were going well for the people as a nation and was a mode of warning and judgment. The second half of the book speaks to a desperate people who have lost many things, who are hungry and afraid and displaced.

This second part of Isaiah shifts to words of hope and promise. There is a call to live, even in desperate times, by a different standard. (Read Isaiah 61:1-4). Things are bad and the prophet comes to the people and brings Good News! And they are promised garlands, oil and a mantle.

God comes to people who are desperate and tells them to decorate! It may seem "out of sync." Decorations are nice and all, but they hardly serve to make things better. They cannot be counted as change agents in the world. Right? Why do we bother? Are we holding on to sentimentality or even worse, shouting in the dark?

In a way, yes, we are shouting in the darkness; it is a noble profession, a calling. When we shout, when we decorate our homes and our church, we are not saying we are unaware of the difficulties, oblivious to bad news; we are saying we chose to live by hope and joy in Jesus rather than despair.

And this is not looking from a rose-colored glass scenario; it is looking through the prophetic call to act in hope and joy. We are called to work (to decorate) because we have hope and we are blessed with a secure future beyond earthly imagination.

Because we hope in joy, we are blessed. John's Gospel calls us to hope also. John reminds us he is not the Messiah; he is the one getting the halls ready with garland, oil and water. We are preparing space, partly with decorations, yes, but mostly with acts of love and service. We practice for receiving the Savior by receiving the one the Savior saved. We don't wait for the return of Christ by excluding others. We acknowledge them as a part of the company for who we wait.

May our decorations in our homes and in our little church be lights in the darkness that point to Christ. I pray we are sharing the light more this year than in previous years even as we wrestle with the creative ways to do this in worship. I am grieving the loss of a full church on Christmas Eve where we light candles from the Christ Candle and sing in the glow of His light.

Let's finish our decorations! We await the angels' proclamation of good news and peace on earth!

Marcus

**Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Community Worship Service
Third Sunday of Advent
December 13th, 2020**

9:30 A.M. Livestream link: <https://youtu.be/5uJXC7Rpnjk>

PRELUDE

Now Sing We, Now Rejoice Paul Manz
(German carol)

GREETING

L: Love has come down to us this Advent Season.

P: Divine love which heals and transforms our lives.

L: With great joy, we receive that love and share it with others.

***P: We open our hearts to all God's children, the last, the least, and the lost,
as well as those who feel privileged.***

L: The Lord has done and continues to do great things for us.

***P: Praise be to God who loves us so much and who challenges us to be people
of joy in this darkened world. AMEN.***

HYMN #213

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

Located in the back of the bulletin - (Printed w/ permission)

OPENING PRAYER

***Lord of Love and Light, shine through our darkness, bringing us hope. Open
our hearts for the journey, our eyes for the light, our spirits for the peace
which you bring. Fill our mouths with laughter and speech with shouts of joy
that we shall reveal the love with which you surround us. We offer this
prayer in the name of the One who is coming into the world bringing your
hope, love, peace, and joy, Jesus Christ. AMEN.***

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Reader 1: *The voice of John the Baptist proclaims that we should prepare for the coming of the Lord, the one who will bring good news to the oppressed, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim liberty to the captives; the one who will build up and repair what has been broken and clothe us in salvation; the one who will bring light and joy back to the desolate places.*

Reader 2: *One thing we have seen over and over again: our ways have not worked. Our best efforts are, at worst, destructive and at best, only a glimmer of what God has to offer. We cannot thrive in our own light. In faith, we look for the light of God.*

Reader 1: *On our Advent journey, we have seen signs of God's light. We light one candle for signs of hope. (Light one blue candle).*

Reader 2: *We light one candle for signs of peace. (Light 2nd blue candle.)*

Reader 1: *Today we light the third Advent candle, the pink candle, the candle of joy and we draw closer to the pure light of God that will bring true joy to our lives. (Light the pink candle.)*

Let us pray:

With laughing hearts and joyous hope, we come to you, O God. With tired souls and withered dreams, we come to you, O God. In our joy and in our sorrow, we look to you, O God. Renew us with your love. Gather us into your strong embrace, that we may know your presence and rejoice in your promised coming. We pray with hopeful expectation. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

- 61:1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;
- 61:2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;
- 61:3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion-- to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

- 61:4 They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.
- 61:8 For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
- 61:9 Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
- 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
- 61:11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Psalm 126 (Please read responsively the text in bold)

- 126:1 When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.
- 126:2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."**
- 126:3 The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.
- 126:4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negeb.**
- 126:5 May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.
- 126:6 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

- 5:16 Rejoice always,
- 5:17 pray without ceasing,
- 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
- 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit.
- 5:20 Do not despise the words of prophets,
- 5:21 but test everything; hold fast to what is good;
- 5:22 abstain from every form of evil.

5:23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5:24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

John 1:6-8, 19-28 (Please stand)

1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

1:7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.

1:8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

1:19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

1:20 He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."

1:21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No."

1:22 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

1:23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

1:24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

1:25 They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

1:26 John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know,

1:27 the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal."

1:28 This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

L: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

P: Thanks be to God!

SOLO – WHILE WE ARE WAITING, COME

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

(Let us offer our silent confessions.)

Lord of Love and Light, shine through our darkness, bringing us hope. Open our hearts for the journey, our eyes for the light, our spirits for the peace which you bring. Fill our mouths with laughter and speech with shouts of joy that we shall reveal the love with which you surround us. We offer this prayer in the name of the One who is coming into the world bringing your hope, love, peace, and joy, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

In the name of Christ, you are forgiven.

In the name of Christ, you are forgiven.

HOMILY

STATEMENT OF FAITH *(The Apostles' Creed, Ecumenical Version)*

***I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.***

***I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and 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.***

GLORIA PATRI (UMH #70)

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

OFFERING

<https://www.wnccumc.org/online-donations-to-churches>

OFFERTORY

What is This Lovely Fragrance Paul Manz
(French Carol)

DOXOLOGY

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

God of love and light: just as John the Baptist came long ago in Judea to witness to your light, we remember that the offering you seek is that what we have and how we live should also witness to the light. We admit that there are times when we feel the darkness is just too prevalent, too strong, then we realize that we are ignoring the call to witness to the light. May we witness through our giving and our compassion, through what we say and what we do. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER AND PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER

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. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN #218

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Located in the back of the bulletin - (Printed with permission)

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

In Dulci Jubilo Robert J. Powell

STAFF & LAY VOLUNTEERS

Pastor: Marcus Dodson: 828-553-0282, marcus61dodson@gmail.com

Organist: Charlie Steele: cwsorgan@comporium.net

Church Administrator: Saunders Grommesh, 469-569-2314, administrator@laketoxawayumc.org

Lay Leaders: Barbara Kline: 828-862-5585 and Paula Markert: 828-553-9434

Audio/Visual for Livestream Chair: Andy Harvill

Soloist/Vocalist: Will Cowan

Advent Candle Lighting: Beth Holimon & Judy Brubaker

Liturgist: Carole Guffey

Prayer Concerns of the Community

Please pray for Thomas Blackstock, Cathie Fussell's nephew, Jeff Tilley, Marty Young, Chad Zimmerman Madison Coleman & the Jeter family and Frank Hardin

Please continue to pray for those who have had the death of a loved one in the recent weeks and months.

Flowers on the Altar

The poinsettia plant on the altar is in memory of Ruth Cech donated by the Marcus Dodson family.

Wreaths on the church doors

The Lake Toxaway Garden Club has donated the two wreaths on the church doors.

Announcements

Drive-Thru Live Nativity

We have been invited to the Oak Grove Baptist Church drive-thru Live Nativity both Friday, December 18th and Saturday, December 19th from 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM. Oak Grove Baptist Church: 649 Kim Miller Rd., Lake Toxaway, NC.

Thank you to the Worship Committee, Lay Leaders & the Shoemakers

A heartfelt thank you to the Worship Committee: Barb Kline, Paula Markert, Kay Blackstock, Gerrie McSwain, Mary Collins, Jerry Kline, Don McSwain, Fred Collins and John & Becky Shoemaker for decorating the church and grounds for Advent!

Can you be a gift to our Students Scholars? Student Scholars Mentors are still needed. If you can pray, text, e-mail and call lending your support to our student scholars please reach out to Cathie Fussell at linguafrog@gmail.com or 910-572-2167. Now is a perfect time to be a mentor for next semester.

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates 213

1. Lift up your heads, ye might - y gates;
 2. Fling wide the por - tals of your heart;
 3. Re - deem - er, come, with us a - bide;
 4. Thy Ho - ly Spir - it lead us on

be - hold, the King of glo - ry waits;
 make it a tem - ple, set a - part
 our hearts to thee we o - pen wide;
 un - til our glo - rious goal is won;

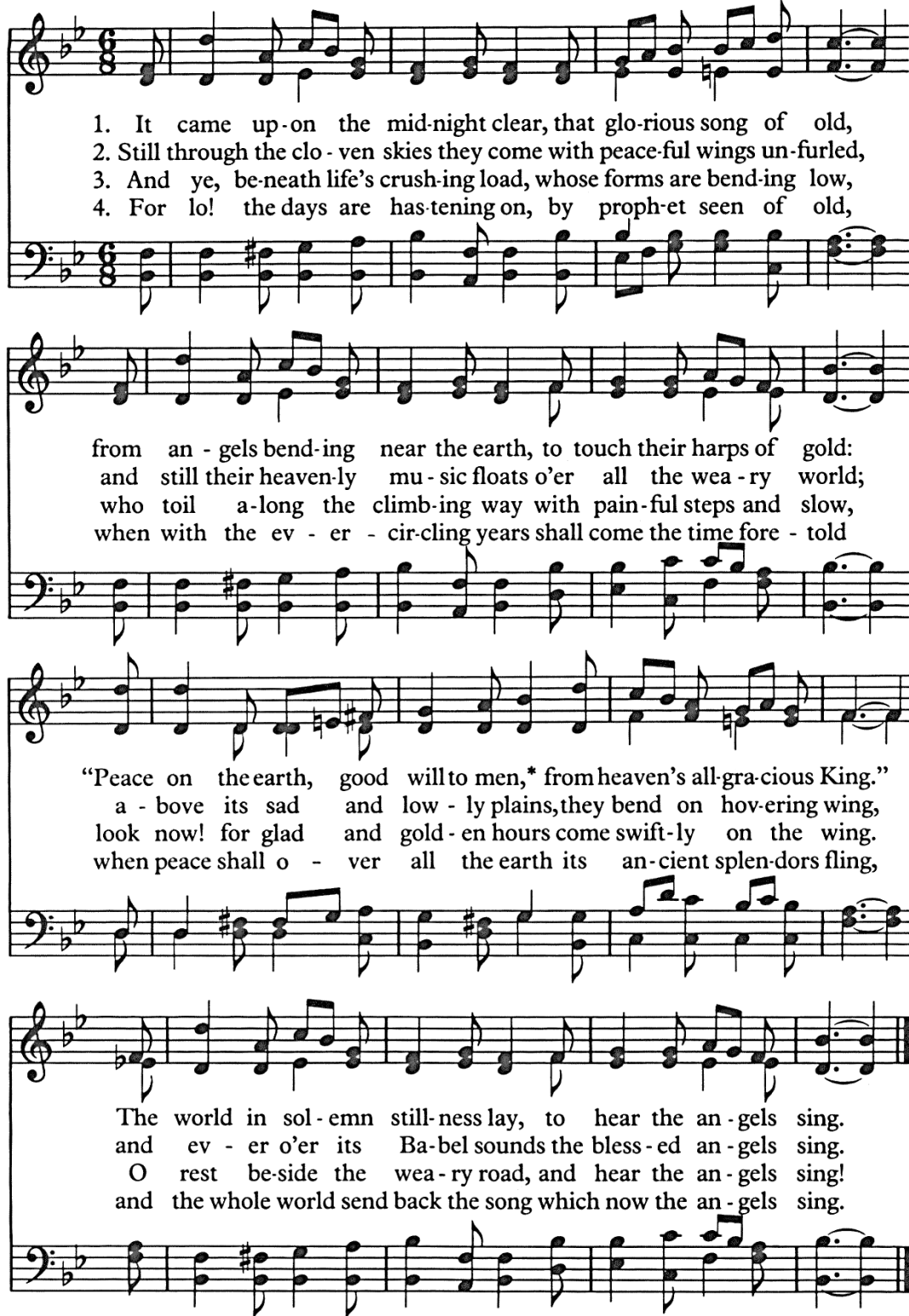
the King of kings is draw - ing near;
 from earth - ly use for heaven's em - ploy,
 let us thy in - ner pres - ence feel;
 e - ter - nal praise, e - ter - nal fame

the Sav - ior of the world is here!
 a - dorned with prayer and love and joy.
 thy grace and love in us re - veal.
 be of - fered, Sav - ior, to thy name!

WORDS: Georg Weissel, 1642; trans. by Catherine Winkworth, 1855 (Ps. 24)
 MUSIC: *Psalmodia Evangelica*, 1789

TRURO
LM

218 It Came upon the Midnight Clear



1. It came up-on the mid-night clear, that glo-rious song of old,
 2. Still through the clo-ven skies they come with peace-ful wings un-furled,
 3. And ye, be-neath life's crush-ing load, whose forms are bend-ing low,
 4. For lo! the days are has-tening on, by proph-et seen of old,

from an - gels bend-ing near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:
 and still their heaven-ly mu-sic floats o'er all the wea-ry world;
 who toil a-long the climb-ing way with pain-ful steps and slow,
 when with the ev - er - cir-cling years shall come the time fore - told

"Peace on the earth, good will to men,* from heaven's all-gra-cious King."
 a - bove its sad and low - ly plains, they bend on hov-ering wing,
 look now! for glad and gold - en hours come swift-ly on the wing.
 when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an-cient splen-dors fling,

The world in sol - emn still-ness lay, to hear the an - gels sing.
 and ev - er o'er its Ba-bel sounds the bless-ed an - gels sing.
 O rest be-side the wea-ry road, and hear the an - gels sing!
 and the whole world send back the song which now the an - gels sing.

*"all" may be substituted

WORDS: Edmund H. Sears, 1849 (Lk. 2:8-14)
 MUSIC: Richard Storrs Willis, 1850

CAROL
 CMD