



4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT | DECEMBER 20, 2020

REFLECTIONS

“Love is only one fine star away.”

STEVIE NICKS | “AFTER THE GLITTER FADES”

“[And] then, just when everything is bearing down on us to such an extent that we can scarcely withstand it, the Christmas message comes to tell us that all our ideas are wrong, and that what we take to be evil and dark is really good and light because it comes from God. Our eyes are at fault, that is all. God is in the manger, wealth in poverty, light in darkness, succor in abandonment. No evil can befall us; whatever men may do to us, they cannot but serve the God who is secretly revealed as love and rules the world and our lives.”

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER | *GOD IS IN THE MANGER*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!
All Let our gentleness be evident to all.
Leader The Lord is near.
All It is time to wake from sleep; for salvation is closer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far spent, the day is near.
Leader The Lord is near! Let us rejoice in the hope of Christ’s coming!
—based on Ro. 13:11; Phil. 4:4

SONG OF PRAISE

O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL / JOHN WADE

1. O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come and behold Him,
born the King of angels;

REFRAIN

*O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.*

2. Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
glory to God, glory in the highest;

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

PRAYER OF ADORATION

All God, our Father, the One who comes in your name comes again with grace and power, with forgiveness and strength, with truth and imagination, with gentleness and love. Great are you Lord, for your steadfast love never fails! Send out your light and truth, and may your Spirit lead us to the place where salvation is born anew. **Amen.**

SONGS OF PRAISE

PREPARE THE WAY, O ZION / FRANS MIKAEL FRANZEN

1. Prepare the way, O Zion,
your Christ is drawing near!
Let every hill and valley
a level way appear.
Greet One who comes in glory
foretold in sacred story.
Oh blest is Christ that came
in God’s most holy name!

2. He brings God’s rule, O Zion;
He comes from heaven above!
His rule is peace and freedom
and justice, truth, and love.
Lift high your praise resounding
for grace and joy abounding!
Oh, blest is Christ that came
in God’s most holy name!

3. Fling wide your gates, O Zion,
your Savior’s rule embrace!
His tidings of salvation
proclaim in every place.
All lands will bow before Him,
their voices will adore Him.
Oh blest is Christ that came
in God’s most holy name!

JOY TO THE WORLD / ISAAC WATTS

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare Him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing!

2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make His blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

4. He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of His righteousness,
and wonders of His love,
and wonders of His love,
and wonders, wonders of His love.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Reader We light these candles as a sign of the coming light of Jesus Christ. We prepare for his coming by remembering these words from the prophet Isaiah: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined." (Is. 9:2)

[Light 4 Advent candles.]

Jesus is the light of the world and in him there is no darkness

All **Let us walk in the light of the Lord!**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

All O promised Christ:
We are a world at war; our peace depends on your coming.
We are a sinful people; our pardon depends on your coming.
We are full of good intentions but weak at keeping promises;
our only hope is your faithfulness.
Forgive us and renew us with your love.
Lord Christ, Word made flesh, our world waits
for your light, for your peace, for your pardon, and for your grace.
Open our eyes that we may recognize your light
and be filled with your saving truth.
Even so: come, Lord Jesus. **Amen.**

SONG OF RESPONSE & ASSURANCE

O HOLY NIGHT / PLACIDE CAPPEAU

O holy night, the stars are brightly shining;
it is the night of our dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
'till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary soul rejoices,
for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees, oh, hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night Divine! O night when Christ was born.

WORDS OF COMFORT & PEACE

Leader "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." —from Isaiah 60:1-3

All **Thanks be to God!**

Leader May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

All **And also with you.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

* Continue passing the peace to one another during announcements.

** Check our website for the latest updates and ways to invest in the life of our church and city.

THE OFFERING & OFFERTORY

If you're accustomed to giving during worship on Sunday mornings, please consider giving online and setting up a recurring or one-time gift through the Subsplash platform. (Subsplash has one of the lowest transaction fees and reduces our fees the more people give online.) To give online, visit <https://gracepasadena.org/give>. Questions? Email info@gracepasadena.org.

THE MORNING LESSON – MATTHEW 2:1-8

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶ "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." [ESV]

THE SERMON – BRANNIN PITRE

Sermon Series: Preparing the Way

Sermon Title: "Following the Star"

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE - THE LORD'S PRAYER

Leader Take a moment to mediate on the words of the Lord's Prayer and let the Holy Spirit cultivate in you a holy longing for the coming of Christ and the fulfillment of all of God's promises. [Silence] Now, let us boldly offer prayers for ourselves, entrusting all things to our God of promise:

All **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,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

A COMMUNION PRAYER FOR ADVENT

All Satisfy us and strengthen us, O God, with your steadfast love. Fill us with the power of your Spirit to bring good news to the poor and lift blind eyes to sight, to loose the chains that bind and claim your blessing for all people. Keep us faithful in your service until Christ comes in final victory and we shall feast with all your saints in the joy of your eternal realm. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours, almighty God, now and forever. **Amen.**

CLOSING SONGS

PRAISE TO THE LOVE THAT MOVES THE STARS

Praise to the love that moves the stars,
that stirs in the depths of our hearts.

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN / AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUAL

CHORUS

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

1. While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light...

2. The shepherds feared and trembled,
when lo! above the earth,
Rang out the angel chorus
that hailed the Savior's birth...

3. Down in a lowly manger
the humble Christ was born
And God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn...

BENEDICTION & SENDING

Leader Stay alert! It is time to wake from sleep for the King of kings and the Bright Morning Star is coming. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

— from 1 Thess. 5:23-24

All **Come, Lord Jesus, come! Amen!**

ADVENT

Advent is here! As Philip Reinders explains, "Advent (from the Latin *adventus*, meaning 'coming' or 'arrival') is the four-week season of preparation for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. A good celebration requires proper preparation for us to fully enjoy it." There are presents to purchase, cookies to bake and people to see. These are all good things! But for many of us, these become our primary preparations for Christmas. For Christians, the focal point of our preparations is remembrance: Advent calls us to remember Christ's first coming and his coming again as he promised. This makes Advent a wonderful time to dive more deeply into spiritual disciplines or to take them up anew. To enter into Advent more fully, use the Grace Pasadena Prayer Guide. Download a copy at our website or request a hard copy. Let's press into Advent and prepare room in our hearts for the King of kings!

GIVING & BUDGET

	<u>JAN-NOV</u>	<u>NOV 2020</u>	<u>DEC¹</u>
OFFERINGS & CONTRIBUTIONS _____	\$401,518	\$40,854	\$27,692
BUDGETED GIVING _____	\$396,00	\$36,000	\$72,000
DIFFERENCE _____	+5,518	+4,854	-44,308

¹as of 12/18/2020; figures exclude directed gifts from outside donors