

Karen Rupp
1.103 Introduction to Old Testament
Dr. Mark Vitalis Hoffman
November 30, 2004

MEMO TO CHURCH SECRETARY:

Please place the following information in the November monthly gazette and in the church bulletin announcements:

Join us for Advent Vespers. We have a special program planned this year. Each Wednesday in Advent, starting Wednesday, November 30, we will convene in the fellowship hall at 5:30 PM for a simple supper, followed by evening vespers at 6:15 PM. We will focus on the Psalm and their message for this season of preparation, waiting and patience. Following vespers, we continue our preparation by making Chrismon ornaments for our tree. Materials and patterns will be supplied. At least one experienced Chrismon maker will be at each table. Patterns range in level of difficulty from simple to complex. There are several patterns that the children can make. So, bring the children, bring friends. All are welcome. We'll decorate the tree using our Chrismon following the Children's program and social on December 19th. Mark your calendars now!

(Chrismons are ornaments made in white and/or gold and each design is symbolic of Christ)

Bulletins (draft):

Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church
 Anywhere
 Advent Vespers
 November 30, 2004
 (Festival of St. Andrew, Apostle)

| <i>Announcements & information about Andrew (brief)</i> | |
|---|---|
| Service of Light | LBW 142 |
| Candle lighting while hymn is sung | 143 |
| The Thanksgiving | 144 |
| Psalmody | 145 |
| Psalm 19 | 223 |
| Psalm prayer | LEADER |
| Silent mediation | |
| Hymn | All the Earth is Hopeful 629 |
| Reading from Ezekiel | 13:1-21 |
| Reading from Romans | 10:10-18 |
| Gospel Canticle | 147 |
| Gospel reading | John 1:35-42 |
| Litany | 148-151 |
| Prayer of Day followed by Lord's prayer | |
| Offering (Choir anthem) | Sing with all the Saints in Glory Hymn 691 |
| Hymn | I Want to Walk as a Child Hymn of the Light 649 |
| Homily | |
| Prayer (251)) | 153 |
| Blessing | |
| | |

Prayer of the Day: As we begin a new year, contemplating the now and the not yet, Lord, stir up your power and come. Help us to wait and to prepare. Protect us by your strength and save us from the threatening dangers of our sin. Almighty God, as the apostle Andrew readily obeyed the call of Christ and followed him without delay, grant that we, called by your holy Word, may in glad obedience offer ourselves to your service; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church
 Anywhere
 Advent Vespers
 December 7, 2004

| <i>Announcements & brief information on Ambrose</i> | |
|---|--|
| Service of Light | <i>LBW 142</i> |
| <i>Candle lighting while hymn is sung</i> | <i>143</i> |
| <i>The Thanksgiving</i> | <i>144</i> |
| <i>Psalmody</i> | <i>145</i> |
| <i>Psalm 102</i> | <i>263</i> |
| <i>Psalm prayer</i> | <i>LEADER</i> |
| <i>Silent mediation</i> | |
| <i>Hymn</i> | <i>Oh Lord Hear my Prayer WOV 772</i> |
| <i>Reading from Isaiah</i> | <i>6:1-13</i> |
| <i>Reading from 2 Thessalonians</i> | <i>1:1-12</i> |
| <i>Gospel Canticle</i> | <i>147</i> |
| <i>Gospel reading</i> | <i>John 7: 53-8:11</i> |
| <i>Litany</i> | <i>148-151</i> |
| <i>Prayer of Day followed by Lord's prayer</i> | |
| <i>Offering (Choir anthem)</i> | <i>Come & Fill R180</i> |
| <i>Hymn</i> | <i>Come to be our Hope, O Jesus R240</i> |
| <i>Homily</i> | |
| <i>Prayer (251))</i> | <i>153</i> |
| <i>Blessing</i> | |
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Prayer of the Day: Stir of our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for your only Son. By his coming give us strength in our conflicts and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world. We remember this evening, Ambrose, Bishop of Milan and ask that we might be faithful and walk in your light as he did. Help us to focus on the true meaning of this season and to resist temptation to join the frenzy of business and commercialism. Help us to be patient, to prepare and wait for you ; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church
 Anywhere
 Advent Vespers
 December 14, 2004

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| <i>Announcements & brief information on St. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila</i> | |
| Service of Light | <i>LBW 142</i> |
| <i>Candle lighting while hymn is sung</i> | <i>143</i> |
| <i>The Thanksgiving</i> | <i>144</i> |
| <i>Psalmody</i> | <i>145</i> |
| <i>Psalm 141</i> | <i>285</i> |
| <i>Psalm prayer</i> | <i>LEADER</i> |
| <i>Silent mediation</i> | |
| <i>Hymn</i> | <i>29</i> |
| <i>Reading from Isaiah</i> | <i>9:6-17</i> |
| <i>Reading from 2 Peter</i> | <i>2:1-10A</i> |
| <i>Gospel Canticle</i> | <i>147</i> |
| <i>Gospel reading</i> | <i>Mark 1:1-8</i> |
| <i>Litany</i> | <i>148-151</i> |
| <i>Prayer of Day followed by Lord's prayer</i> | |
| <i>Offering (Choir anthem)</i> | <i>Come Now Oh Prince of Peace R 101</i> |
| <i>Hymn</i> | <i>Prepare the Royal Highway LBW 649</i> |
| <i>Homily</i> | |
| <i>Prayer (251)</i> | <i>153</i> |
| <i>Blessing</i> | |
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Prayer of the Day: Almighty God, you called John the Baptist to give witness to the coming of your Son and to prepare his way. We remember this evening also John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, renewers of your church. Grant us wisdom to see your purpose for us today and open our eyes to see and our ears to hear your will so that we witness to Christ's coming and to prepare his way; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church
 Anywhere
 Advent Vespers
 December 21, 2004
 (Festival of St. Thomas, Apostle)

| <i>Announcements & brief information on St. Thomas</i> | |
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| Service of Light | <i>LBW 142</i> |
| <i>Candle lighting while hymn is sung</i> | <i>143</i> |
| <i>The Thanksgiving</i> | <i>144</i> |
| <i>Psalmody</i> | <i>145</i> |
| <i>Psalm 136:1-9,23-26</i> | <i>283</i> |
| <i>Psalm prayer</i> | <i>LEADER</i> |
| <i>Silent mediation</i> | |
| <i>Hymn</i> | <i>Creator of the Stars of Night R 104</i> |
| <i>Reading from Judges</i> | <i>6:36-40</i> |
| <i>Reading from Ephesians</i> | <i>4:11-16</i> |
| <i>Gospel Canticle</i> | <i>147</i> |
| <i>Gospel reading</i> | <i>John 14:1-7</i> |
| <i>Litany</i> | <i>148-151</i> |
| <i>Prayer of Day followed by Lord's prayer</i> | |
| <i>Offering (Choir anthem)</i> | <i>Unexpected and Mysterious R 108</i> |
| <i>Hymn</i> | <i>Fling Wide the Door LBW 32</i> |
| <i>Homily</i> | |
| <i>Prayer (251)</i> | <i>153</i> |
| <i>Blessing</i> | |
| | |

Almighty and ever-living God, you have given great and precious promises to those who believe. Grant us that perfect faith which overcomes all doubts; Stir of our hearts, to be in readiness for your coming and give us strength to be steadfast, patient and peace bearing in all our relationships, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Homily – Advent 1 Midweek
Text: Psalm 19

(May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, oh Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Amen)

Familiar words, the last verses of our Psalm this evening. Words that set an appropriate tone for Advent – a season of self-reflection, preparation, and patient waiting. A time to contemplate what was, is and is not yet.

First, Psalm 19 reminds us of the power and Glory of the creator. Each day, the sun stays its course, bringing light and the business of the day, then dark and the repose of night. Creation provides rhythm to our days. Psalm 19 speaks to us of these rhythms of life – day after day the heavens declare God's glory.

Night after night the sky reveals his greatness – who can help but marvel at all creation when gazing on a starlit, full moon night. I thank God frequently for sunrise, sunset, rainbows and chirping birds. As I walk early in the morning, I can't help but marvel at the beauty and see that God is indeed our greatest artist and composer. These past few nights have been crisp, clear, bright moon, starry nights. Yesterday morning the sunrise was no less than spectacular – gentle waves of bright crimson rolling to a clear blue, then gradually muting to a golden as it fused with the source of radiance and then all blended into the blueness of full daylight. Birds chirped and squirrels scurried.

Several times each year I like to take long quiet walks in solitude and just be. I try to empty myself – to notice the wonders of nature and just be. It's hard to just be. My mind wants to make plans, to make lists, to go over past lists to see if anything is left undone, or if anything is done - but I try to just be.

The church year echoes the rhythms of creation, the rhythms of Jesus' life, the rhythms of our lives. "Summer and Winter, Sunday and Monday, Evening and Morning." As a single year circles around the line that is a life, it brings many occasions for reflection, remembrance and renewal. Each community or household can gain strength from offering attention to these gifted pieces of

time.”¹ Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and then Advent again.

Within each season specific days make manifest the mystery of God's active presence with and for the world, with and for us, as each fast or feast invites us into this mystery in a different way.² Advent is a time to reflect, to search and empty ourselves to make room for the bridegroom to enter and fill us with his presence.

The psalmist reminds us of the book of scriptures, which makes known to us the will of God and points to the excellency and usefulness of scripture. He then moves to show us how to improve on it. There is no need for words – God knows our hearts. And that may well give us cause for concern. So we ask God to forgive our faults, those secret to ourselves as well as those we know.

The writer of this psalm is exuberant in his celebration of the qualities of God's word. To the outside observer the psalmist's remarks are almost excessive. Who ever heard of mere “words” being able to change one's life? “More to be desired than gold.” Really! But the outside observer misses the gift that is enjoyed by those who taste and see and find that God's Word has a unique, transforming, gracious quality that leaves us different than it finds us.

David knew we all have blind spots. There are facets of our personality and thought patterns that remain hidden from our understanding. It is a comfort to know that they are not hidden from God. He understands us completely, and loves us just as thoroughly. Because He alone knows us so well and loves us so much, we can trust Him to do in our lives whatever work needs to be done. We never have to be afraid of His methods or unsure of His motives. His desire is that we become all that we can be in Him, and He knows how to go about that transformation in the way that is best for us. Because of His grace, we become ready for God to heal us, to transform us, to remove our defects, known and unknown. We will be changed from the inside out.

¹ Bass, Dorothy C. *Receiving the Day. Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time.* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001) p.113.

² *ibid.* 86

It is hard to be, just be, and not be caught up in the flurry of shopping and the exhortations of commercials to a meaning of the season that is desiring the gold instead of the Word.

Advent is a season of waiting, of preparation.

Henry Nouwen says “a waiting person is a patient person. The word “patience means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will manifest itself to us. Impatient people are always expecting the real thing to happen somewhere else and therefore want to go elsewhere. The moment is empty. But patient people dare to stay where they are. Patient living means to live actively in the present and wait there. Waiting then, is not passive. It involves nurturing the moment, as a mother nurtures the child that is growing in her womb...as Mary nurtured her child .”³

I’ve been reading a book “Receiving the Day” by Dorothy C. Bass.

For her, the first Sunday in Advent is one of those special meditative, contemplative times. On that day her family pays special attention to celebrate the anniversary of their baptisms.

Advent is ours, now, and it speaks the hopes that belong to all our years. Often we miss it, its expectant voice barely noticeable in the midst of commercial chaos of worldly preparation for the coming. Its subdued colors are hard to see in a society all covered with decoration and loud constant demands to buy, to party, to business this time of year. Or do we notice it only at church, separating the story it tells from most of the stories we live. The Christian year makes its way gently pruning away obstructions, internal and external. It reminds me of who I am and what really matters. It teaches me again and again whose woods these are, whose sky this is, whose oceans and rivers these are - something that I too often forget.

³ Ford, Michael, ed. *Eternal Seasons, A Liturgical Journey with Henri Nouwen* (Notre Dame: Sorin Books, 2004) p31.

Preparing doesn't mean doing nothing. Preparing means letting God do some pruning. It means looking into ourselves, emptying ourselves to make room for the coming into by the bridegroom.

Receive the day –

Stay in the living moment of each day

Don't fall prey to the lure of the commercials

Wait with joyful anticipation because we know that the Lord will come. "Our expectation leads to joy and our joy to a desire to give to others. Real joy always wants to share. It belongs to the nature of joy to communicate itself to others and to invite others to take part in the gifts we have received. Advent is indeed a time of joyful waiting and joyful giving."⁴

Prepare your heart to receive the Lord

Buechner: "The thoughts of Our Hearts"

"Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit" the collect goes, "that we may perfectly love" if not thee, because we are such a feckless and faithless crowd most of us, then at least ourselves, at least each other. If, as someone has said, we are as sick as our secrets, then to get well is to air those secrets if only in our own hearts, which the prayer asks God himself to air and cleanse. When our secrets are guilty secrets, [like the burden of expecting too much from them] I had unwittingly placed on my own children, we can start to make amends, to change what can be changed; we can start to heal. When they are sad and hurtful secrets, like my father's death, we can in a way honor the hurt by letting ourselves feel it as we never let ourselves feel it before, and then, having felt it, by laying it aside, we can start to take care of ourselves the way we take care of people we love. To love our neighbors as we love ourselves means also to love ourselves as we love our neighbors. It means to treat ourselves with as much kindness and understanding as we would the person next door who is in trouble."⁵

⁴ *ibid.*, p34

⁵ Buechner, Frederick. *Listening to Your Life*, (San Francisco:Harper) 1979. p329.

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Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable
in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.