



December 1, 2024
Greenfield Charge United Church of Christ

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Sunday Meditation

A Christian is one who points at Christ and says, “I can’t prove a thing, but there’s something about his eyes and his voice. There’s something about the way he carries his head, his hands, the way he carries his cross – the way he carries me.”

Frederick Buechner
Listening to Your Life (1992)

Community News

Prayer List and Prayers of the People

Prelude/Lighting of the Candles

* *Call to Worship*

In the midst of night's shadows and anguish,

We pray earnestly to experience your presence.

As dawn slips into the horizon and relieves night of its reign,

We pray earnestly to sense your presence.

As daylight grows into noontime, filled with the glow of sun's light,

We pray earnestly to know your presence.

Advent Candle Lighting Litany

Advent Scripture

Jeremiah 33:14-16 NRSV

The Righteous Branch and the Covenant with David

¹⁴The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

Advent Reading

From deep in the past, Jeremiah calls to us, "The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 33:14). Beloved, the days are surely coming when the yearning of the land; the longing of the sun, moon, and stars; the desperate need of the people of earth for flourishing and peace will receive their fulfillment.

While fear, anxiety, misinformation, and suspicion surround us on every side, we choose to watch and wait in hope, preparing our hearts to notice and cooperate with God's grace already at work in our midst.

We light this candle of hope as a sign of our commitment to pay attention and prepare for the days that are surely coming and are already here—the days when God’s kingdom of love, justice, and mercy will reign.

Lighting the First Candle

* *Advent Candle Lighting Hymn*

VH # 93

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

* *Advent Prayer*

Faithful God,

We thank You for the hope found in Jesus, the righteous Branch who brings justice and peace. As we light the candle of hope, remind us of Your promises and help us to trust in Your grace. May we live as reflections of Your love and justice, bringing light to the world. Come, Lord Jesus, and reign in our hearts. Amen.

* *Advent Blessing*

May the God of hope fill you with peace and joy as you trust in Him. Go forth in the light of Christ, living out His love and bringing hope to the world. Amen.

Children's Message / Hanging of the Greens

* *Opening Children's Hymn*

“I Saw Three Ships”

Insert

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

God of the Possible and Probable,

Gloom often encapsulates us when life is confusing, and conflict is great. Our faith is rattled, and we are swallowed by shadows of fear. The world often feels like the end is near even when a new beginning is around the corner. We forget that even when shadows have lengthened, there remains a crack in the surface. Light begins to stream into our space, and warmth dances upon our hearts. When fear unnerves us, may we cling to the hope of God’s love and the possibilities of joy once again. Amen.

Words of Grace

Take comfort, dear friends, that God's grace will fill our hearts with joy as we know that light grows ahead. May we cling to the crumbs of hope as we step into the nighttime with faith, knowing Divine Bliss accompanies us in each step.

Epistle Reading

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 NRSV

⁹ How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? ¹⁰ Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

¹¹ Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. ¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. ¹³ And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

* *The Reading of the Holy Gospel*

Luke 21:25-36 NRSV

Gloria Tibi (Glory be to Thee, O Lord.)

TH #497

The Coming of the Son of Man

²⁵ "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶ People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

²⁹ Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Exhortation to Watch

³⁴ “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place and to stand before the Son of Man.”

* *Gloria Patri*

* *Meditation Hymn “Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending”* Insert

Today's Message

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hades; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic/Christian church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

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 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.**

* *Sung Response* “Hear Our Prayer, O Lord” TH # 501

The Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Statement

Offertory (MH)

* Doxology TH # 551

* Offertory Prayer

Joyous God, Originator of all Gifts,

This day and always, we celebrate the gifts of our hands and hearts. We share our talents and time, knowing our energy builds the world with love. We share our treasures, knowing that all gifts we entrust to your Church will build your Realm. With joy, we devote our firstfruits to loving you and your children. Amen.

* *Closing Hymn* “Lo! How a Rose E’er Blooming” Insert

* *Benediction*

As we open the doors to the dawn of this season,
May the Creator of Our Hearts fill us with Joy,
May the Light of Christ fill our hearts with Hope,
And may the Spirit of Tranquility assure our souls with Strength.
Amen.

* *Three-Fold Amen* TH # 558

* *Postlude/Extinguishing of the Candle*

For All the Joy: Written by Rev. Michelle L. Torigian, senior pastor of St. Paul United Church of Christ, Belleville, Illinois.