

Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Metcalfe  
DECEMBER 17, 2023  
ADVENT 3  
Reverend Michael Fleming

Fr. Michael: As we joyously approach Bethlehem and the gift of Light waiting for us, we acknowledge that this sacred place we call our spiritual home lies on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe peoples.

People: **May we dance together in a spirit of reconciliation and joy.**

Fr. Michael: Our service begins with the lighting of the third candle of Advent, the candle which speaks to us of JOY. We begin by hearing the Isaiah declaration that we “prepare the way of the Lord” sung three times, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord: Prepare ye the way of the Lord...”

Fr. Michael: Scripture says, “I will rejoice in the Lord greatly; my whole being shall exult in my God for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation”. Lord, through your prophets you have promised us your JOY. You have declared good news to those who are oppressed.

People: **O God, give us JOY!**

Fr. Michael: We continue to place our hope in your promise, O God, to bind up our broken hearts.

People: **O God, give us JOY!**

Fr. Michael: We depend on your promises, O Giver of JOY; your promise of freedom to all captives.

People: **O God, give us JOY!**

Fr. Michael: We take comfort in your promises to us and await you with JOYFUL and expectant hearts.

People: **O God, give us JOY!**

Fr. Michael: The grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Spirit be with you all.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: The poet David wrote, “Shout with joy to God all the earth! Sing to the glory of his name and offer him glory and praise” (Psalm 66:1). With that same spirit we pray, Almighty God

People: **to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Fr. Michael: Three times do we acknowledge the sovereignty of God in our lives as we say,

People: **Holy God, holy and mighty! Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us.**

Fr. Michael: God of power and mercy, you call us once again to celebrate the coming of your Son. Remove all those things that hinder our love for you so that when he comes, he may find us waiting in awe and wonder for him who live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. "Prepare the way" the prophets call, "make ready the highways of the Lord."; how we long to walk down the sidewalks in God's kingdom of peace and joy. Prepare your hearts for God's realm opens for us a new day; how we yearn for a time when the wolf and the lamb will live together in harmony. Prepare the way for God promises a new day when adversaries will lay down their arms; how we dream of a world transformed by God's love and joy. May the God of hope fill our hearts with all joy and peace; may we rejoice for the gifting of God's Spirit in our lives.

All: **Amen**

Reader: A reading from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-11)

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. 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. Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks; foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers; but you shall be called the priests of the Lord; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast. Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy. For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul 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 like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: Lord God our Father, no one has ever seen you but you have shown yourself to us in your beloved Jesus Christ. Help us to recognize his face in the poor and the humble. Do not allow us to overlook him in the faces of the broken- hearted and the

weak. Let the Holy Spirit give us the courage to bring his good news of hope and joy to all who wait for him. We ask this through Christ the Joy-Bearer.

All: **Amen**

Reader: Our psalm for this day of joy is Psalm 126

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.

All: **The Lord has done great things for us.**

Reader: Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed.

All: **The Lord has done great things for us.**

Reader: Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses of the Negev.

All: **The Lord has done great things for us.**

Reader: Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

All: **The Lord has done great things for us.**

Reader: Our second reading is from Paul's first letter to the people of Thessalonika (1Thessalonians 5: 16-24)

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. 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. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: God is soaked in our world. God's Spirit lives and breathes in and through all that is. We are lost only when we do not understand that God is already with us and in each one of us. Our task is recognition of God's initiative to be at home with us – acceptance of God-With-Us. Then we cannot but be glad.

All: **Amen**

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ according to the Blessed St Luke (St. Luke 1: 46-55)

People: **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Fr. Michael: And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and

exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

Fr. Michael: This is the very Gospel of Christ.

People: **Thanks to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## Homily

Fr. Michael: Rejoicing that Light has shone through the darkness, we affirm,

**All: I believe in one God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He 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, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He 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.**

Reader: Heavenly Father, we are not all together convinced that darkness is a thing of the past. Many people feel that the world is one of darkness and gloom and that pressures crowd in on us and get us down. The causes are varied: bereavement, illness, money, worries about family, trouble at work or not having work, drugs, drink, boredom, doubt, weariness, futility, etcetera.

People: **Lord, hear us when we call upon you and answer our prayer.**

Reader: There are also world issues: war in the Middle East and in Ukraine, conflict in Africa; poverty not only in the so-called Third World but on our doorsteps; the issue of climate change; disease; unfair trade practices and global monopolies. It doesn't help when we as Christians feel that we should be doing so much more but don't know what to do or how to do it. Gracious and loving God, we rejoice that you are with us in our troubles and that you know and trust us.

People: **Lord, hear us when we call upon you and answer our prayer.**

Reader: Even though we have made a mess of things personally and collectively, you remain faithful. We rejoice that your Son came not to a perfect world but to a broken world, to bring Light into the world's darkness and our own.

People: **Lord, hear us when we call upon you and answer our prayer**

Reader: We pray for our dark and weary world, a world in need of your grace and peace and love, a world of fellowship among all people, a world of renewed joy and understanding. We pray for your Church which finds herself in the midst of the darkness and ask that you strengthen us to be your light for all your children. We pray for our diocese, remembering especially this week Shane, Anne, Linda, as well as The Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, Sacred Circle, and the Ministry of Reconciliation and National Indigenous Archbishop, The Most Rev. Christopher Harper. We also remember St. Paul's, Hazeldean-Kanata and The Reverend Canon Stephen Silverthorne and staff at Ascension House. In our own small parish, we try to shine your light and hold before you those who seek your face in the darkness of their lives,

remembering particularly Liesa, Marjorie, Beth, Randy, Howard, Irene, Richard, Deb, Leonard, Louise, Jeanette, Cheryl, Zachariah and those who are known to you alone.

People: **Lord, hear us when we call upon you and answer our prayer.**

Reader: We don't wave a magic wand and everything gets sorted out. You require us to exercise our faith and to respond to your call to preach the good news and to live that out in real and concrete action to share your love and joy with others. Help us to share your good news in word and in deed – the same good news that fisherfolk and farmers and domestic engineers and slaves and children were empowered to proclaim that there is a Saviour who loves us and whom we can love and adore and serve. We have been set free. Enable us to use our freedom to share in the building of your kingdom. In the light of this, help us to see that we have something to shout and dance about, for the Lord is our light and our salvation.

People: **Lord hear us when we call upon you and answer our prayer. Amen**

(The Reverend Ian Maclean Starters for Sundays, Church of Scotland website)

Fr. Michael: God loves justice and despises wrongdoing, yet God is faithful and has made an everlasting covenant with all who turn from sinful ways and strive earnestly for righteousness and reconciliation. May the whispers of our hearts be pleasing to God.

People: **We bow our heads in holy reverence... O God, we long to be free of the burdens that hold us captive. We long to be bearers of good news to the oppressed and the marginalized. We long to return to your favour and to be forgiven for our transgressions. Lord, loosen the chains of doubt that bind us and hear our prayers.**

Fr. Michael: You are forgiven! God loves you and blesses you with new life and new beginnings. Put aside your old ways and become new! God gives a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning. Sing and dance and rejoice; never forget the gift of God's redeeming grace given to us by the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All: **Amen.** (The Reverend Penny L. Lowes From Tears to Rejoicing)

Fr. Michael: And the peace of the Living Lord Jesus be always with you.

People: **And also with you.**

WE SHARE THE SHALOM OF GOD WITH ONE ANOTHER

Fr. Michael: God of joy, renew in us the joy of your salvation and make us a living sacrifice in your blessed name.

All: **Amen.**

Fr. Michael: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Fr. Michael: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Fr. Michael: It is indeed right to thank you and praise you, holy and gracious God, creator of all things, ruler of heaven and earth, sustainer of life, for you are the source of all goodness, rich in mercy and abounding in love; you are faithful to your people in every generation, and your word endures for ever. Therefore with angels and archangels, with the fellowship of saints and the company of heaven, we glorify your holy name, evermore praising you and saying,

All: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Fr. Michael: We praise you, merciful Father, not as we ought, but as we are able, because in your tender love you gave the world your only Son, in order that the world might be saved through him. He made you known by taking the form of a servant, healing the sick, liberating the oppressed, reaching out to the lost. Betrayed, reviled, and nailed to the cross, he confronted the power of sin and disarmed it for ever. In his offering of himself, he became the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Redeemed by Christ, we have been adopted as your children; by your pardon you have made us worthy to praise you. On the night he was betrayed, Jesus, at supper with his friends, took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, gave it to them, and said, "Take and eat: this is my body which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." After supper he took the cup of wine, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me." In obedience to him and with grateful hearts we approach your holy table, remembering our Saviour's sacrifice, and rejoicing in his victory. Confident in his sovereign purpose, we declare our faith.

All: **Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.**

Fr. Michael: Send your Holy Spirit on us that as we receive this bread and this cup we may partake of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving. May we be renewed in his risen life, filled with love, and strengthened in our will to serve others; and make of our lives, we pray, a pure and holy sacrifice, acceptable to you, knitting us together as one in your Son Jesus Christ, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, now and forever.

All: **Amen.**

Fr. Michael: As Jesus has called us to pray and given us the model for all prayer, together we say,

People: **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.**

Fr. Michael: God of promise, you prepare a banquet for us in your kingdom.

People: **Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.**

Fr. Michael: The gifts of God for all the children of God.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

WE SHARE THE BREAD AND WINE OF JOY AND HOPE TOGETHER.

Fr. Michael: Merciful God, may this Eucharist free us from our sins, fill us with unending joy and prepare us for the birth of your Son and our Saviour. We ask this in the name of Jesus who is Lord now and forever.

All: **Amen**

All: **Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Fr. Michael: So now we leave this place of worship, and while much of the road ahead is uncertain, the path changing constantly, we know some things that are solid and as sure as the ground beneath our feet and the sky above our heads. We know that God is love and that Christ's light endures forever. We know that the Holy Spirit is here, found in the space between all things, closer to us than our next breath, binding us to one another until we meet again. So let us now go in the name of God: Father, Son and Spirit until we meet again.

All: **Amen**

Worship follows the Holy Eucharist in the Book of Alternative Services Copyright © 1985 by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada and/or Eucharistic Prayers, Services of the Word, and Night Prayer © 2001 by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada. All rights reserved. Reproduced under licence from ABC Publishing, Anglican Book Centre, a ministry of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, from Anglican Liturgical Library. Further copying is prohibited.