



Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
An Advent Service of Word and Song
Hicks Memorial Chapel
Tuesday, November 29, 2016

GATHERING

Prelude

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

arr. Timothy Albrecht

(Quoting theme from *Messiah* recitative “*Comfort Ye My People*” by G.F. Handel
with the Advent Hymn, *Comfort, Comfort You my People*)

*Comfort, comfort you my people, tell of peace, thus says our God;
Comfort those who sit in darkness bowed beneath oppression's load.*

*Speak you to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them;
Tell them that their sins I cover, and their warfare now is over.*

Make you straight what long was crooked, make the rougher places plain;

Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits God's holy reign.

*For the glory of the Lord now o'er earth is shed abroad;
And all flesh shall see the token that God's word is never broken.*

- Johannes Olearius/trans. Catherin Winkworth

Words of Introduction

Advent: The Beginning of Restoration from Exile

This is the first of four weeks in the season of Advent, which means “coming” or “arrival.” We begin the liturgical year with this season as we celebrate Christ’s coming into the world and watch with expectant hope for his coming again.

Advent is a time when we recognize our own experience of exile and of longing for home in the Lord. The sin that is still so prevalent in our world puts us alongside the Israelites, wandering in the wilderness, longing for a Messiah. We remember our own longing for and need of forgiveness, salvation, and a new beginning. We know that sin sends us into a sense of exile by separating us from God and one another. But being cast out, separated from a sense of home, from God, and from one another, does not free us from the grips of that which sent us into the wilderness in the first place. Only God can do that. To restore relationship with His people, God entered into our exile of sin and suffering and even death. And in so doing, he overcame it all – releasing us from captivity and calling us home.

So during Advent, we look back to Christ’s first Advent – his first coming – with the assurance that while we once were no people, we are now God’s people. While we once were in exile, the Good Shepherd has lovingly sought us out and brought us home. But we also look forward to Christ’s second coming as the fulfillment of all that was promised by his first coming.

Let us prepare our hearts for worship. Please rise.

***Call to Worship**

Isaiah 40:3, Traditional Monastic Liturgy

Leader: A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,

***People:* make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”**

Leader: See! The ruler of earth shall come,

***People:* the Lord who will take from us
the heavy burden of our exile.**

***Opening Song**

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

GtG #88



O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive Is - ra - el,
O come, thou Root of Jes - se, free thine own from Sa - tan's tyr - an - ny;
O come, thou Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen wide our hea - venly home;



that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
from depths of hell thy peo - ple save and give them vic - tory o'er the grave.
make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to mi - ser - y.



Re-joyce! Re-joyce! Em-man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el.

Text: Latin prose, pre-9th cent.; trans. composite

Music: Plainsong; adapt. Thomas Helmore, 1852; arr. John Weaver, 1988

***Call to Confession**

God sent a savior into our midst –

One who has covered us in light and washed us clean.

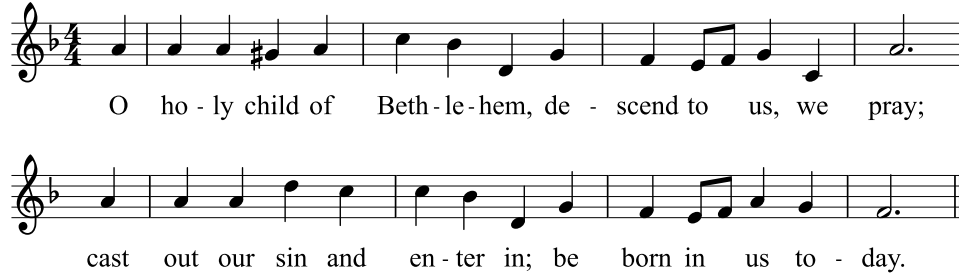
Therefore, let us prepare a way for our Savior;

let us, in confidence of God’s incarnate love, confess our sin:

***Prayer of Confession**

***People:* We are captive, exiled, O God,
because we have, each in our own way,
chosen our own path away from you.
We are lost and in need of guidance.**

silent prayer and confession



O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin and en - ter in; be born in us to - day.

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1868
Music: Lewis Henry Redner, 1868

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

Leader: The truth of Advent is this:
Jesus enters into our exile.
We no longer wander in the wilderness but are brought home in Christ.
Friends, believe the good news of the Gospel:

People: **In the name of our coming Lord, we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

***Passing of the Peace**

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you!
People: **And also with you!**

THE PEOPLE CRY OUT FOR RESTORATION IN THE MIDST OF EXILE

Morning Psalm

O Hear Our Cry, O Lord
(Psalm 80)

GtG #355

THROUGH THE PROPHETS, GOD PROMISES RESTORATION

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5

Leader: The Word of the Lord.
People: **Thanks be to God.**

Canticle

Comfort, Comfort Now My People

GtG #87

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE GIVEN A NEW HOME

Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-15a

Leader: The Word of the Lord.
People: **Thanks be to God.**

Canticle

The Days Are Surely Coming

GtG #357

Prayer

God of love,

in the wilderness of the Jordan you sent a messenger
to prepare people's hearts for the coming of your Son.

Help us to hear his words, repent, and walk in the way of justice and peace.

You gave your only Son to free us from captivity to sin and death.

Help us to look forward in hope to the coming of our Savior.

In His name we pray.

Amen.

SENDING

*Sending Song

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

GtG #82

*Blessing

Postlude

Prepare the Way, O Zion

arr. Paul Manz

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.

O blest is Christ that came in God's most holy name.

Christ 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.

O blest is Christ that came in God's most holy name.

- Mikael Franzen

*please rise in body and/or spirit

Worship Notes

Advent is both a beginning and an end, an alpha and omega of the church's year of grace. Too often considered merely a season of preparation for the annual commemoration of Christ's birth, this rich and many-layered season is actually designed to prepare the Christian for the glorious possibilities of the parousia [second coming]. It is a season of longing expectation—"Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

—William G. Storey, *Days of the Lord*
(New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), vol. 1, p. 21.

Leaders in Worship

Rev. Kendra Buckwalter Smith, *Director of the Worship Program*

Michael P. Frank III, *Chapel Musician*

D. Mark Blank, *Audio Visual Technician*