

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2021

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**FIRST SUNDAY of ADVENT**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP** *(from Isaiah 11)*

One: The prophet Isaiah said, "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots."  
**All: The promised Messiah was long in coming. But come he did.**  
One: And still he comes to us, even now.  
**All: So rejoice and be glad, for God is with us. Let us worship the Lord  
our God.**

**OPENING HYMN** "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates" GtG 93

One: Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates;  
**All: behold, the King of glory waits;**  
One: the King of kings is drawing near;  
**All: the Savior of the world is here.**

One: Fling wide the portals of your heart;  
**All: make it a temple, set apart  
from earthly use for heaven's employ,  
adorned with prayer and love and joy.**

One: Redeemer, come!  
**All: I open wide  
my heart to thee; here, Lord, abide.  
Let me thy inner presence feel  
thy grace and love in me reveal.**

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## UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We yearn for your coming, O Lord, then shun you when you appear. We ask for your guidance, but then ignore it when offered. We look to you for help and protection, then forget you when the crisis is over. Forgive us, gracious Lord. Instill within us an eager desire to receive you into our lives. Come to us and transform us as your people. Remake us in the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

## SILENT CONFESSION

### ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(from I John 4 & Luke 2)*

One: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent God's only Son into the world so that we might live through him."  
All: **This is indeed "good news of great joy for all the people."**  
One: So rejoice and be glad, for in Jesus Christ we are loved, in Jesus Christ we are accepted, in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.  
All: **"Glory to God in the highest heaven!"**

## THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you.  
All: **And also with you.**  
*(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)*

## THE WORD

### SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 1:1-16

MATTHEW 1:1-16 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>1</sup> *An account of the genealogy  
of Jesus the Messiah,  
the son of David,  
the son of Abraham.*

<sup>2</sup> *Abraham was the father of Isaac,  
and Isaac the father of Jacob,  
and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,  
<sup>3</sup> and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar,  
and Perez the father of Hezron,  
and Hezron the father of Aram,*

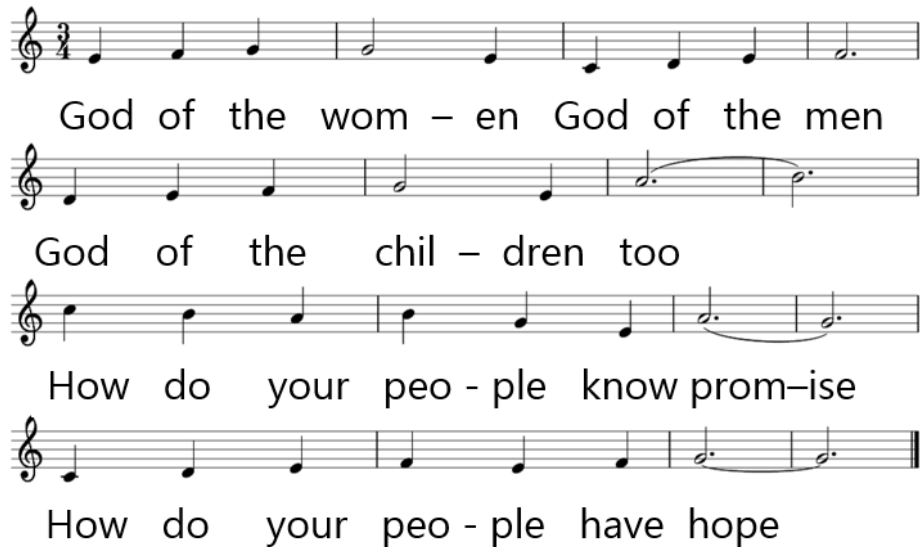
<sup>4</sup> and Aram the father of Aminadab,  
and Aminadab the father of Nahshon,  
and Nahshon the father of Salmon,  
<sup>5</sup> and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab,  
and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth,  
and Obed the father of Jesse,  
<sup>6</sup> and Jesse the father of King David.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,  
<sup>7</sup> and Solomon the father of Rehoboam,  
and Rehoboam the father of Abijah,  
and Abijah the father of Asaph,  
<sup>8</sup> and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat,  
and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram,  
and Joram the father of Uzziah,  
<sup>9</sup> and Uzziah the father of Jotham,  
and Jotham the father of Ahaz,  
and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,  
<sup>10</sup> and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,  
and Manasseh the father of Amos,  
and Amos the father of Josiah,  
<sup>11</sup> and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers,  
at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

<sup>12</sup> And after the deportation to Babylon:  
Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel,  
and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel,  
<sup>13</sup> and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud,  
and Abiud the father of Eliakim,  
and Eliakim the father of Azor,  
<sup>14</sup> and Azor the father of Zadok,  
and Zadok the father of Achim,  
and Achim the father of Eliud,  
<sup>15</sup> and Eliud the father of Eleazar,  
and Eleazar the father of Matthan,  
and Matthan the father of Jacob,  
<sup>16</sup> and Jacob the father of Joseph  
the husband of Mary,  
of whom Jesus was born,  
who is called the Messiah.

## THE ADVENT WREATH: “Mothers of Messiah”

(“Mothers of Messiah” by Tracy Sybesma. From *Reformed Worship 85* © September 2007  
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God of the wom – en God of the men  
God of the chil – dren too  
How do your peo - ple know prom-ise  
How do your peo - ple have hope

*ROEDER (God of the Sparrow), Tune by Carl Schalk.  
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## PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

### SERMON “Of Trees and Leaves” by Pastor Bill Vincent

I bet I know what most of you were doing a couple of days ago: stuffing your face!  
And...gathering around the table – as best we could (there is still a pandemic going on).  
Gathering around the table with friends...and family: mothers and father, sons and daughters,  
grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles.  
A living genealogy.

Like Jesus’ family tree, that reveals (whether explicitly or not)  
**stories of heroes and stories that people might prefer to leave hidden.**  
that speaks of those illustrious and not so illustrious  
that shares  
**shining moments as well as dark deeds discussed only in whispers.** (Advent  
Wreath - Tracy Sybesma)

Sounds a lot like our family (whether revealed explicitly or not). The uncle who’s always  
too loud. The aside, “Whatever happened to...?” Stories of heroes, of a sorts...and the people

we'd prefer remained hidden; the shining moments...and the dark deeds; the illustrious...and the not so illustrious.

Family *tree*.

Jesus once said,

*"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."* (Matthew 13:31-33 NRSV)

Many who know of such things will tell you that the mustard seed doesn't really become a tree, at least not a tree like we would think of a tree.

But these words – this story – does serve as an allusion to a prophecy of Ezekiel, where God says,

*I myself will take a sprig  
from the lofty top of a cedar;*

...

*I myself will plant it  
on a high and lofty mountain.*

...

*in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit  
and become a noble cedar.*

***Under it every kind of bird will live;  
in the shade of its branches will nest  
winged creatures of every kind.***

...

*I the Lord have spoken;  
I will accomplish it.*

(Ezekiel 17:22-24 NRSV)

The flourishing of God's kingdom.

It reflects something of the people's yearning, part of their hope in the coming of the Messiah King:

- establishing of a realm – a 'tree' – where "*every kind*" can find 'a place to call home'.
- a relationship where they belong: where they know hope and fulfillment in who they are, and God's will, and who they are in God's work.

We yearn for that hope and fulfillment. We yearn to be included, welcomed, embraced. Wouldn't it be great to be a part of Jesus' family tree? Truth is, we are.

But, from the outset, we face a problem, a quandary, a sticky wicket. And we face it within ourselves.

We want to be included, but we're not always sure we want to include...the one who hurt me, who rubs me the wrong way.

We want to be welcomed, but we're not always sure we want to welcome...those who look different; who, by their very presence, make us feel uncomfortable.

We want to be embraced, but we're not always sure we want to embrace...the one who won't give me the time of day.

You know what they say: "You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family."

And our inclusion, our welcome, our embrace is to a family: the family of God, and Jesus' family tree.

A family where all sorts are included: "*every kind of bird...winged creatures of every kind.*"

If you look deeper into the people in Jesus' genealogy, you will find the good and the bad.

Joram and Amos "did what was evil in the sight of the Lord."

Ahaz performed "abominable practices of the nations."

Manasseh "shed innocent blood."

This is not to say their actions are affirmed – very clearly, they are not.

But *they* are included: Joram, Amos, Ahaz, Manasseh. They are part of Jesus' family tree.

So, too, even unexpected ones.

Yes, all sorts are welcomed...including women. Women were not expected in the genealogy. But they are very clearly there...and welcomed.

Women who want to be welcomed, mentioned, recognized at the table and in the story, but so often have not been.

Tamar - who makes some unorthodox choices, yet fulfilled God's way.

Rahab - part of the "oldest profession."

Ruth - an outsider, a foreigner.

Bathsheba - whose name is not even mentioned; simply "*the wife of Uriah.*"

All sorts are welcomed.

And all sorts are embraced.

Remember that story Jesus told, the one we call the Prodigal Son? A father with two sons. The younger asks for, and receives, his portion of the inheritance, then proceeds to go out and blow it all. And when he returns – in disgrace – he is embraced in the arms of his father. But it is the older son who stands outside the welcoming celebration, angry. And when his father begs him to come in to the celebration, we are left with a question: will he accept the embrace?

All are invited.

All are welcomed.

All are embraced.

Even the ones we don't like.

If we refuse the invitation, if we refuse to come because of someone we don't like, then *we* are the ones who lose. We miss out on the welcome and embrace into the family tree.

A tree from which can be made...a manger.  
A tree from which can be made...a table.  
A tree from which can be made...a cross.

This morning we remember at this [--communion--] table the cross: the embrace he made of the world as he stretched out his arms upon the cross...and loved us all, and invited us all to this table, to celebrate his welcome of us all, to commemorate his sacrifice for us all, to mark and enact and embody his inclusion of us all in his family tree.

Of course, the table looks kind of small, don't you think?  
But the thing is about tables: they can be made bigger.  
Table leaves: adding leaves to the table to extend the table to include all.  
Maybe we can picture it here this morning.  
Hopefully we will even embody it.  
Table leaves that expand the length and breadth – and reach? – of the table.  
So may our hearts expand that we may welcome all in the name of the one who welcomes us all.

**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (*Contemporary*)

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
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,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and 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.**

*(The Apostles' Creed)*

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Pastor: Coming God...  
People: ...renew our hope.

## THE EUCHARIST

### OFFERING

*Invitation*

*Reflection*

*\*Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**In gratitude we celebrate the gift of you, O Lord. And thank you for this family of faith, which enriches our lives and enables us to share. In humility we offer ourselves. Use the gifts we offer to be part of what you are doing in the world even now; and use us to proclaim your glory and share your love. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

**HYMN** "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" GtG 347 (*Verses 1 & 2*)

- 1. Let all mortal flesh keep silence,  
and with fear and trembling stand;  
ponder nothing earthly minded,  
for with blessing in his hand  
Christ our God to earth descendeth,  
our full homage to demand.**
- 2. King of kings, yet born of Mary,  
as of old on earth he stood,  
Lord of lords, in human vesture,  
in the body and the blood,  
he will give to all the faithful  
his own self for heavenly food.**

*(Public Domain)*



## SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

*Invitation to the Lord's Table*

*Prayer of Thanksgiving*

Leader: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

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

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

*(The prayer continues...)*

*The Lord's Prayer* (Contemporary)

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.**

*Breaking of the Bread*

*Communion of the People*

*(Please hold the bread so that we might partake of it together, to remind us of our participation in this sacrament as a community. Please drink the cup as you are served, reminding us of our individual participation in this sacrament and our personal commitment to our Lord.)*

*Prayer*

## SENDING

**\*CLOSING HYMN** “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” GtG 88 (*Verses 1, 6, & 7*)

1. **O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.**
  
6. **O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
our spirits by thine advent here;  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.**
  
7. **O come, Desire of nations, bind  
all peoples in one heart and mind;  
bid envy, strife, and discord cease;  
fill the whole world with heaven's peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.**

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### **\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

**Pastor:** ...And let the gathered people of God say...  
**People:** ...Amen.

### **POSTLUDE**

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