

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

December 21, 2020

Welcome to this Blue Christmas service, a time when we can acknowledge the sadness we feel at Christmas time. This is the time of the shortest day and longest night of the year when memories of past experiences and the pain of present reality can become overwhelming. Recognizing that this is not a season of joy for everyone, in this service we will be invited to reflect on the pain, the loneliness, and the sorrow we may feel and offer it all to our great sign of hope, the Holy Child of Bethlehem. We pray that all of us will find hope and comfort in knowing that we are not alone.

WELCOME

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PEACE

INVOCATION

PRAYER

SOLO

“Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

Lutheran Book of Worship – #30

Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art,
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king;
Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring;
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
By thine all-sufficient merit raise to us thy glorious throne.

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 9:2,4

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow, a light has shone. ⁴For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God, our Redeemer.

PRAYER

Pastor: *Let us pray: God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful thoughts and memories. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.*

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 43:1-3a

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”

PRAYER

Pastor: *Let us pray: God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful thoughts and memories. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.*

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

SOLO ANTHEM

“Held”

by Natalie Grant

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

“Stay”

Poem by Jan Richardson

Read by Jeanine Robb-McGrath

FIRST CANDLE: REMEMBERING THOSE LOVED AND LOST

Pastor: We light this Advent candle to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices. We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us this season which anticipates Christmas.

People: May God's eternal love surround them.

As the first candle is lit, we remember those whom we have loved and lost.

HYMN

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

Lutheran Book of Worship #34 vs. 1

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

SECOND CANDLE: REMEMBERING THE PAIN OF LOSS

Pastor: We light the second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace.

People: Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.

As the second candle is lit, we remember the pain of loss in our lives.

HYMN

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

Lutheran Book of Worship #34 vs. 2

O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to Your tribes on Sinai's height,
in ancient times once gave the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe.

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

THIRD CANDLE: REMEMBERING DIFFICULT TIMES

Pastor: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us, years of difficult times. We remember the poignancy of memories, the grief, the sadness, the hurts, the pain of reflecting on our own mortality.

People: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.

As the third candle is lit, we remember difficult times in life.

Pastor: In the spirit of this season, we come to God as people coping with loss, pain, suffering, loneliness, grief, sadness.

God, we come to you as Christmas dawns with pain growing inside us. As the nights have been growing longer, so has the darkness wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of our longest nights, we offer to you the pain in our hearts, the traumas that some of us cannot put into words.

Loving God, hear our prayer,

People: And in your merciful love, answer.

Refrain



It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Pastor: Compassionate God, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. A death or loss has changed our experience of Christmas. Once it was a special day for us too, but someone has died or moved away. Or we have lost a job, or a cause. We find ourselves adrift, alone, lost. Lord, help us find our way.

Loving God, hear our prayer,

People: And in your merciful love, answer.

Refrain



It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Pastor: The Christmas season reminds us of all that used to be and cannot be anymore. The memories of what was, the fears of what may be, overwhelm us. All around us we hear the sounds of celebration, but all we experience is a sense of feeling blue. Please be near us this night.

Loving God, hear our prayer,

People: And in your merciful love, answer.

Refrain



It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Pastor: Loving God, hear our prayers this night. Grant to all, and especially to those in sorrow this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Christ, who taught us to pray together saying,

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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

HYMN

“Christmas Hallelujah”

Song by Leonard Cohen; Lyrics by Cloverton

BLESSING

Pastor: May the hope of the Christ Child sustain us in our darkness. That together we may live in His light and hope. Go forth in the name of the promised Christ. Amen.

