

Perley Lutheran Parish  
December 13, 2020  
Third Sunday in Advent



**Opening Hymn:** Holy Child within a Manger

Holy Child within the manger, lead us ever in your way,  
so we see in every stranger how you come to us today.  
In our lives and in our living give us strength to live as you,  
that our hearts might be forgiving and our spirits strong and true.

**Invocation**

P In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C Amen.**

P How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

**C My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord;**

P My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,

**C Where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.**

P Blessed are those who dwell in your house,

**C Ever singing your praise!**

**Lighting of the Advent Wreath**

O come, O come, Em - man - u -  
el, and end this gloom of night. Bring  
hope to the world, bring peace to the  
earth, and fill us with love's pure light.

P In this season of Advent, we celebrate with joyful hearts.

**C Christ is our light and the source of our joy**

P We count our blessings, and give thanks for God's goodness and grace

**C Christ is our light and the source of our joy**

P We strive to search for the good in neighbors near and far.

**C Christ is our light and the source of our joy**

P we remember that God has promised us full and joyful lives.

**C Christ is our light and the source of our joy**

P This morning we light three candles – the candles of hope, peace and today, joy. This candle reminds us that we have reason to be joyful, even in the midst of strife. We remember that the angel proclaimed Christ's birth as "Good news of great joy, to all people." We celebrate today with joyful hearts and commit ourselves to spreading that joy to the world around us.

### **Confession and Absolution**

P Let us confess our sins to God and ask his forgiveness.

**C Almighty God, we confess that we have turned away from your will for us. We do not follow your commandments and we daily sin against you in our thoughts, words and actions. We seek to satisfy our own sinful desires and listen to the temptations of the world around us. Have mercy on us and forgive our sins.**

P God has had mercy on us. He sent his Son to be our Savior. Jesus suffered, died and rose from death for us. Through faith in his name we will have a home in his presence forever. I announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**C Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!**

### **Prayer of the Day:**

**Heavenly Father, when the time was right, you fulfilled your promise and sent your Son into the world to be our Savior. Our crucified and risen Lord, who once slept in a humble manger in Bethlehem, has now ascended to rule at your right hand and prepare a place for**

**us. We look forward with joy to the day when he will return in glory to take us to himself forever. Hear our prayer in the name of our Advent King. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!**

**Children's Message** (*Needed: a picture of your home*)

Have you ever seen this house? (*Allow the children to respond.*) This is a picture of my home. Does your house look like this one? How is your house different? (*Let children respond.*) All of our houses may be different, but to each of you, your house is your home, the place where you and your family live.

When it was time for Jesus to be born, his mother Mary, and Joseph, her husband, were away from their home in Nazareth. They were in Bethlehem, and Bethlehem was very crowded. Mary and Joseph could not find a place in the inn, like a motel, so they had to stay in a stable. When Jesus was born, Mary made a bed for the baby in a manger, a feeding trough for animals!

Jesus did not have a home when he was born, but he grew up in the town of Nazareth. When he was an adult, he did not stay in one town for very long. He traveled around to many different towns, healing people who were sick and teaching the people about the kingdom of God. At the right time, Jesus died on the cross for us and on the third day after that, he rose from the dead. Before he ascended into his heavenly home, he said, "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" Jesus ascended into heaven to rule over us as our King and to prepare a home in heaven for us. Someday we will have a heavenly home that will be better than any earthly home. The best thing about our heavenly home is that Jesus will be there and we will live with him forever! Let's pray:

Lord Jesus, we look forward to living with you forever in our heavenly home. Amen.

**Old Testament Reading**, Genesis 12:1-5

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan.

### **Epistle Reading, Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16**

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God ... These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

### **Gospel Reading, John 14:1-6**

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

### **Message: No Place for Them**

We have spoken of Christmas as a time for travel – at least it is normally, right? People will travel when possible during this season because Christmas is for so many a time to be at home, to gather with other family members. Christmas is a season to celebrate, to worship together and eat together, to follow cherished traditions and exchange gifts. For many people, too, Christmas can be a lonely time, as it might be for those in the armed forces, with no family nearby or stationed far from home. Others may have no home or family near, and still others may be suffering from the effects of a storm or another disaster; they may have no home at all. Yet many people, most people, want to be home for Christmas.

The people of God, who have always been travelers, know what it is like to be far from home. Abraham was told to leave his family home behind and go to an unknown country, a new home that God would show him. So Abraham gathered up his family and his belongings and set out for the land of promise with nothing more to lead him than just that—a promise—the promise of God. He arrived in that land of promise, but by the time of his death he didn’t really own too much of that new land. He had purchased only a small parcel of land, a

burial cave for his wife and himself. Abraham lived and journeyed by the promise. He trusted God to keep his word. God said there was a home awaiting Abraham, and Abraham believed it.

God had also told Abraham that through his family, his descendants, all the families on earth would be blessed. Abraham believed that promise, too, and centuries later the promise was fulfilled. Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abraham, was born, he who is the Son of God and son of Mary, the promised Savior who would be a blessing to the nations. But like his ancestor Abraham, Jesus did not always have a place to call home. When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, the city was crowded and “there was no place” for them in the inn. So Jesus’ birthplace was a stable, his bed a lowly manger.

As he was growing up, Jesus called Nazareth home, but he left that hometown to travel through Palestine, to serve, to teach and heal and to take up the road to the cross. When a would-be disciple sought to follow him, the Lord replied, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20). The Savior, the Son of Man, who left his heavenly home for the sake of our salvation, on this earth had “nowhere to lay his head.” Finally Jesus walked that last road to the place of execution outside of Jerusalem. After suffering and dying on the cross for our sins, Jesus was laid to rest—a final home for his body, at least so his followers thought—in a borrowed tomb. Even in death, our Lord and Savior had no place of his own.

But that tomb was certainly borrowed; it was not used for long! On the third day after his death, Jesus left the tomb, rising bodily from the dead. With his resurrection he guarantees that we too, on the Last Day when he returns, will rise bodily from our graves to live in a new home in his presence forever. Before Jesus ascended to his heavenly home, he told his disciples that he would be leaving to prepare a place for them. He ascended into heaven to the right hand of his Father, the place of power and authority, to rule over us and to prepare a place for us. The crucified and risen Lord, who slept in a borrowed manger because there was no other place for him, who had nowhere to lay his head, who was laid to rest in a borrowed tomb, ascended to prepare a place for us.

The home that awaits us is a home of promise, just as it was for Abraham. There was a home of promise waiting for him that he longed to see. Even when he finally lived in tents in the promised land, he knew that a better home awaited him, a more solid home, a lasting home, “a city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” Abraham trusted the promise of a better city, an eternal home, and he will not be disappointed. Neither will we, because we look forward to the same promised, eternal home, the city that has foundations, prepared for us by our God and Savior.

During Advent, as we prepare to celebrate Jesus’ first Advent, his birth in Bethlehem, we also

look forward to his Second Advent, his Second Coming. On the Last Day, Jesus will return to take us to himself, to enjoy forever the home he has prepared for us in his presence. It is an eternal home, bought and paid for in full with the blood of Jesus. It is ours by God's grace through faith in Jesus our Savior.

During this Christmas season, if you are away from home or even if you are at home, you may just be feeling a little homesick for a home that is still to come, our lasting home, our eternal home. The Savior for whom there was no place in Bethlehem's inn is preparing a place for us. He has promised to come again and take us to himself. While we wait, we offer up our Advent prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus!" Amen.

### **Hymn of the Day** Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;  
oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the babe is Lord of all.  
Swift are winging angels singing, noels ringing, tidings bringing:  
Christ the babe is Lord of all. Christ the babe is Lord of all.

### **Prayers** (Lord, we long for our eternal home and so we pray, **Come, Lord Jesus!**)

Lord Jesus, there was no place for you in Bethlehem's inn, so your first bed was a humble manger in a stable. You laid aside your majesty to take on human flesh, to be born among us for the sake of our salvation. We praise you, Lamb of God, for your redeeming death and resurrection. Lord, we long for our eternal home and so we pray, **come, Lord Jesus!**

Lord Jesus, especially during this Christmas season, fill us with compassion for those who are lonely, for those who cannot get home and for those who have no home. Help us to seek out opportunities to help others, providing them with shelter, food or clothing as they have need. We pray that they might see your love through our service and witness and so come to worship you as their Savior. Lord, we long for our eternal home and so we pray, **come, Lord Jesus!**

Lord Jesus, we give you praise and thanks for our earthly homes, for our families and for all of the gifts that you have given us. Yet with Abraham we too long for another home, a lasting home, the city that has foundations, that heavenly city whose designer and builder is God. We pray that you would come quickly, as you have promised, to take us home. Lord, we long for our eternal home and so we pray, **come, Lord Jesus!**

Lord Jesus, even when we walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us, deliver us, and fulfill your purpose for us. According to your steadfast love, grant healing and wholeness to those who are mourning as they deal with tremendous loss, we ask that you continue to send healing to those dealing with illness and recovery. We lift up those within our congregation and those that have reached out to us for prayers, Jeff, Kirk, Paxley, Brian, Vern, Veronica,

Lisa and all of those that we now name silently in our own hearts. Lord, we long for our eternal home and so we pray, **come, Lord Jesus!**

### **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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. 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

### **Benediction**

Jesus said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. In the name of the Father, and the +Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### **Closing Hymn** Away in a Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay, close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care and take us to heaven to live with thee there.

**Dismissal:** Go in peace, prepare the way of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Mark Your Calendars:

Wednesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> – 7PM Mid-Week Devotion on Facebook

Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup> – 9AM service streaming from Nora with the Children's Program

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