

BERN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
820 West Leesport Road, Leesport, PA 19533



Be patient...
until the
coming of
the Lord.

JAMES 5:7

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Sunday, December 11, 2022 — 10:00 a.m.

INTRODUCTION

A note of joyful expectation marks today's worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God's reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ's advent among us.

PRESERVICE MUSIC

PRELUDE "Es Ist Ein Ros' Entsprungen" -Kirchengesang

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(*) Please stand as you are able.

LBW (green hymnal) WOV (blue hymnal)

GATHERING

*** CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P: In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.

C: **Blessed be God's name forever. Amen.**

P: Beloved, now is the time to wake from sleep. Let us confront our sins, and confess them to the one who is merciful and just.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: God of new beginnings,

C: **we confess that we have not welcomed your holy reign. We have strayed from your paths. We prepare for war instead of peace. We dishonor one another and your creation. Purify us with your refining fire and set us again on your way of love, that we may bear fruit worthy of repentance, and welcome your coming among us.**

P: People of God, a new thing is growing in our midst, a tender branch, a living sign. By water and the Spirit you are joined to this wonder. You have put on † Christ, and your sins have been washed away. Rejoice in the way of the Lord.

C: **Amen.**

*** GATHERING HYMN**

“Once in Royal David’s City”

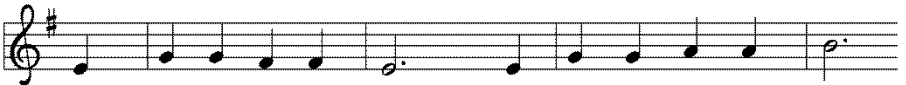
WOV #643

*** APOSTOLIC GREETING**

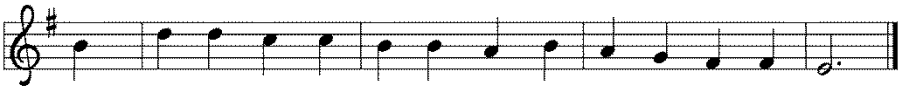
P: The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **And also with you.**

*** KYRIE**



1 Have mer - cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol - emn prayer.
2 Have mer - cy on us, Christ, and wash a - way our sin.
3 Have mer - cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de - part.



We come to hear your liv - ing word; it saves us from de - spair.
Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be - gin.
Re - new us with your sav - ing pow`r; cre - ate in us new hearts!

* HYMN OF PRAISE

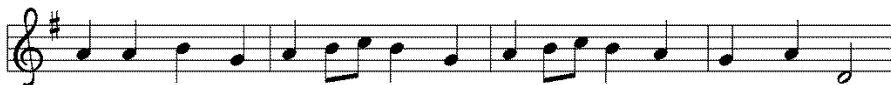
vs. 1



1 Glo-ry be to God in heav-en; peace, good-will to all the earth.
2 Glo-ry be to Christ for - ev - er, Lamb of God and Lord of love.
3 Ho - ly One we now ac-claim you; Lord a - lone, to you we call;



Might-y God of all cre - a - tion, Fa - ther of sur - pass - ing worth:
Son of God and gra-cious Sav - ior, you have come from heav'n a - bove;
Ho - ly One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:



we ex - alt you, we a - dore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.
on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.
Je - sus Christ, with God the Spir - it, in the Fa - ther's splen - dor bright.



Saints and an - gels bow be - fore you; here on earth our songs we raise.
Hear our prayer; re - store, for-give us; in your prom-ise firm we stand.
For the peace that we in - her - it, glo - ry be to God on high!

* PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us pray together.

C: **Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

* ADVENT LITANY

P: Praise to you, O God, who holds our joy and sorrow. You bring water to parched ground and life out of death. Bless us as this light grows, and send sorrow and sighing to flee

away. Give us strength and patience, trusting that you are true to your promises. Transform the lives of all who suffer with your wonders near at hand.

C: **Amen.**

*** ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING**

“Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah” vs. 1, 2, and 3

*Light one candle to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.*

*He shall bring salvation to Israel,
God fulfills the promise.*

*Light two candles to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.*

*He shall feed the flock like a shepherd,
gently lead them homeward.*

*Light three candles to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.*

*Lift your heads and lift high the gateway
for the King of glory.*

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:1-10

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God’s coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

¹The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus ²it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.

³Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
“Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.”

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;

⁷the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God’s people;
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

⁹No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

L: Word of God, word of life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 146:5-10 (*read responsively*)

⁵Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help,
whose hope is in the LORD their God;

⁶**who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;**

who keeps promises forever;

⁷who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger.

The LORD sets the captive free.

⁸**The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;**

the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹The LORD cares for the stranger;

the LORD sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.

¹⁰**The LORD shall reign forever,**

your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!

SECOND READING: James 5:7-10

In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.

⁷Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord.

The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸You

also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹Beloved, do not grumble against one another,

so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take

the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

L: Word of God, word of life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

* GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le-lu - ia! Lord and Sav - ior: o - pen now your sav - ing word.



Let it burn like fire with - in us; speak un - til our hearts are stirred.



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

* GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the eleventh chapter.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.** (*sung*)

John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.

²When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" ⁴Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

⁷As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written,
 ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
 who will prepare your way before you.’

¹¹Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has
 arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the
 kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.** (*sung*)

SERMON – Pastor Kenneth Gould

Silence for meditation.

HYMN OF THE DAY

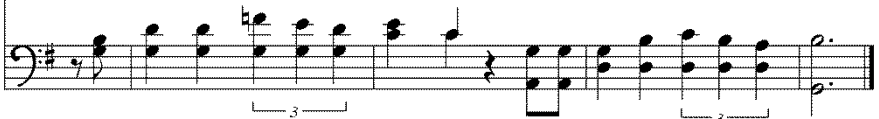
“He Came Down”



1 He came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love;
 2 He came down that we may have light; he came down that we may have light;
 3 He came down that we may have peace; he came down that we may have peace;
 4 He came down that we may have joy; he came down that we may have joy;



he came down that we may have love;
 he came down that we may have light;
 he came down that we may have peace; hal-le-lu-jah for-ev-er - more.
 he came down that we may have joy;



*** APOSTLES' CREED**

P: God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, let us confess our faith:

C: **I believe in 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 into hell.

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.

*** PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: As we prepare for the fullness of Christ's presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope.

A brief silence.

P: Gracious God, we rejoice in the gifts of your Spirit. Equip the global church to magnify your love and peace in every land. We pray for the work of the Lutheran World Federation and ELCA Global Mission. God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: Abundant God, we rejoice in your creation. Revive lands we have squandered and depleted. Make gardens flourish in cities and neighborhoods. Cleanse polluted air and water so living things may breathe, drink, and praise you. God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: Righteous God, we rejoice in your justice. End racism and oppression. Deliver all who are unjustly imprisoned or persecuted. Reconcile nations and peoples in conflict. Help us pray for our enemies. God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: Healing God, we rejoice in your compassion. Comfort any in distress because of worry, illness, or loss. We pray especially for Lisa, Tina, George, Barbara, Tim, Jane, Myra, Bob, Ruth, and all those we name in our hearts or aloud... Strengthen and protect health care workers, rescue teams, crisis counselors, and all who risk themselves to keep others safe. God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: Abiding God, we rejoice in your company. Give us calm and patient hearts as we gather with family and friends. Keep us mindful of those for whom this season is not happy. Console the grieving and surround them with loving support. God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: Generous God, you bless us with the gift of supply pastors who shepherd our congregation each Sunday. Bless us with patience, wisdom, and guidance as we go through this time of change, and we pray that you would lead us in the right direction as we discern your vision for our future. God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: Faithful God, we rejoice with Mary, Mother of our Lord, and with all the saints, that your mercy endures for all generations. Look with favor on those who have died and lead us to joyfully sing of your everlasting promises. God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: God of longing, you know our deepest needs. By your Spirit, gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray.

C: **Amen.**

* **SHARING OF THE PEACE** (American Sign Language)

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us share a sign of that peace with one another.

MEAL

* **THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

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

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

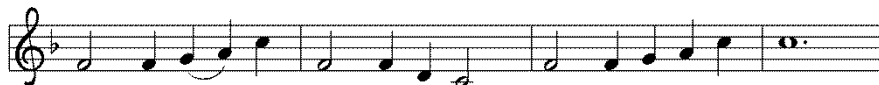
C: **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

* **THE PREFACE**

P: It is indeed right and salutary...we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



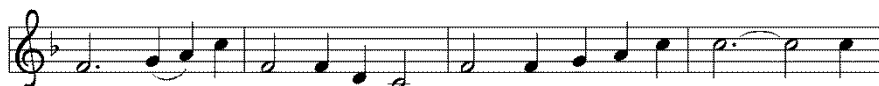
* THE SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.



Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -



san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

* THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

LBW, page 70

* THE LORD'S PRAYER

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as our Lord Jesus taught us:

C: **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.**

*** INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God, who has come to save you.

*** THE AGNUS DEI**



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*** POST-COMMUNION BLESSING**

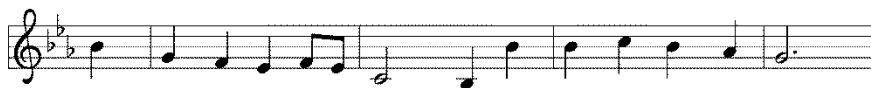
P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: **Amen.**



* POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE

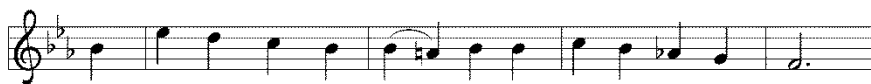
“O Lord, Now Let Your Servant”



1 O Lord, now let your ser - vant de - part in heav'n-ly peace,
2 Then grant that I may fol - low your gleam, O glo - rious Light,



for I have seen the glo - ry of your re - deem - ing grace:
till earth-ly shad - ows scat - ter, and faith is changed to sight;



a light to lead the na - tions un - to your ho - ly hill,
till rap-tured saints shall gath - er up - on that shin - ing shore,



the glo - ry of your peo - ple, your cho - sen Is - ra - el.
where Christ, the bless - ed day - star, shall light them ev - er - more.

* POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

P: Let us pray. Faithful God, in this meal you have remembered your mercy, bringing heaven to earth in the body and blood of Christ. As we wait for the day when all your promises will be fulfilled, sustain us and strengthen us by this holy mystery. Guide us toward your promised future, coming to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

C: **Amen.**

SENDING

* BLESSING

P: God the eternal Word, who dwells with us in Jesus, and who holds us in the grace of the Holy Spirit, ✠ bless you now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

* **SENDING HYMN**

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

LBW #71

* **DISMISSAL**

P: Go in peace. Christ is near.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

* **POSTLUDE**

“Go Tell It on the Mountain”

-Spiritual

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COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS UPDATE:

UPDATED WORSHIP GUIDELINES: If you choose, face masks are no longer required in our building during worship. We respect the decision of those individuals who wish to continue masking. They are encouraged to take the precautions they feel are necessary to protect their health.

SANCTUARY SEATING: For your convenience and comfort the sanctuary now has open seating. The pews on the **RIGHT** side will remain taped for those who wish to continue to remain physically distant during worship.

CONTACTLESS OFFERING is being practiced. You may place your offering in the plate near the door of the sanctuary; give on-line; or through the mail. Thank you for giving generously as an act of worship and an expression of the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity and faithfulness. Thank you.

WELCOME to all who have gathered here for worship this morning! If you are a visitor to Bern, please sign the guest book in the narthex or fill out the yellow card in the pew rack and

place it in the offering plate. We rejoice in the opportunity to worship our Lord together!

WE WELCOME TO THE LORD’S TABLE all the baptized. We believe that Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, is present in the bread and wine as God’s gracious gift to us. For those who prefer it, grape juice is available in the pre-filled glasses in the trays at the front of the center aisle. Contactless elements are available from the Greeter when you receive your bulletin or in the tray at the front of the aisle. Please notify an usher if there is a need for the pastor to bring communion to the pew. Children who do not yet commune are invited to come forward to receive a blessing.

OFFICE HOURS:

Church Phone: 610-374-4343

Church Email: bernlutheranchurch@gmail.com

Secretary Korinne: Tuesday–8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Wednesday–12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Thursday–8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Members: Lisa Miller, Tina Hissinger, George Schaeffer, Barbara Speicher, Tim Moyer, Jane Schaeffer, Myra Bernhart, Bob Frey, and Ruth Keeney.

Family and Friends: Paul, Family and friends of Frederick Hotzman, Jr., Sheri Mafeo, Bishop Christopher deForest, Eleanor, Shannon Helms and family, Austin Kennedy, Ann Skinner, Glenva, Warren, Courtney Davis, Giselle Davis, Joanne King, Tim Brown, Robin Brown, Matt DeLeon, Marcia Stoudt, Pastor Joyce Seip, Peter and wife, Bill and Joan Carpenter, Arthur W. Zimmerman, Natalie, Charles Trophe, Michael and Troy, Bob Stoner, Ashley Rizzuto, Philip Triantis, Mike, Peggy Deemer, Joe and Karen Young, Brian, Jamie Hey, Glenn Jones, Kailey, Renee Fullmer, Patrick, Susan, Owen Hey, Joyce, Rev. Fred Foerster, Brenda Frey, and Lesley Wegman.

(If you would like to add anyone to our prayer list, please contact Korinne in the church office. Please also notify her of anyone that could be removed.)

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS AND SPONSORS:

ORGANIST: Jane Battaglieri

OPENER: Linda Lash

LECTOR: Brenda Reichart

ACOLYTE: Aidan Slusser

GREETER: Nancy Malandra

ALTAR FLOWERS: Given to the Glory of God in honor of JoAnn and Chris Ketz's birthdays by Phil Ketz.

BULLETINS: Given to the Glory of God in honor of Terri's birthday by Barry Shurr.

CELEBRATIONS THIS WEEK:

BIRTHDAYS: 12–Owen Steiger, 13–Makayla Riegel,
15–Theresa Shurr, 17–JoAnn Ketz

ANNIVERSARIES: 14–Richard and YuYun Greener (27 years)

WHAT'S ON THE CALENDAR THIS WEEK:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Sunday, December 11 | ▪ Catechetical Class, 9:00 a.m. |
| | ▪ Worship, 10:00 a.m. |
| | - Third Sunday of Advent |
| | - Pastor Kenneth Gould |
| | ▪ Sunday School, 11:00-11:30- a.m. |
| | ▪ Christmas Cards for Homebound Members Due |
| | ▪ Poinsettia Orders Due |
| Monday, December 12 | ▪ Senior Berners, 1:00 p.m. |
| Wednesday, December 14 | ▪ Hawk Mountain Boy Scouts, 6:00 p.m. |
| Friday, December 9 | ▪ Frog Pond, 6:00-8:00 p.m. |
| Sunday, December 18 | ▪ Catechetical Class, 9:00 a.m. |
| | ▪ Worship, 10:00 a.m. |
| | - Fourth Sunday of Advent |
| | - Pastor Kenneth Gould |
| | ▪ Sunday School, 11:00-11:30- a.m. |

THANK YOU to Pastor Kenneth Gould for leading us in worship this morning and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

POINSETTIA ORDERS – Orders are due today.

CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR OUR HOMEBOUND MEMBERS are due today.

STAFF CHRISTMAS GIFTS – If you would like to contribute towards monetary Christmas gifts for our Designated Pastor, Gary Rarick, our organist, Jane Battaglieri, or our Secretary, Korinne Hotzman, please place your donation in an envelope (envelopes can be found on the round table in the narthex) and clearly mark the amount you are contributing to each staff member's gift. If nothing is noted on the envelope, your contribution will be divided evenly between the staff members. Contributions may be placed in the offering plate or mailed to the church. **All contributions must be received by Sunday, December 18.** Thank you!

ALTAR FLOWER, BULLETIN, AND NEWSLETTER SPONSORSHIPS – Sign-up sheets for 2023 are now available on the bulletin board in the hallway. Altar Flower are \$35.00/Week, Bulletins are \$20.00/week, and our monthly Newsletter is \$40.00/month.

ANGEL TREE (SHARING THE LOVE OF JESUS WITH OUR COMMUNITY) – Berks Children and Youth Services has reached out again this year to see if we are interested in providing gifts for children that are in their program. We had a tremendous response to this last year and know the joy that it brought to those who provided the gifts as well as those that received them. We have received a list of names of children and some gift suggestions. This information can be found on a tree in the narthex. If you would like to participate, please choose a name from the tree that you would like to shop for. **Wrapped gifts must be returned to the church no later than Wednesday, December 14,** so that they can be picked up and delivered to the children for Christmas.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Last week John the Baptist was full of religious fervor, certain in his convictions, and bold in his proclamation about the role of the coming Messiah: “Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 3:10).

But there was no fire. There was no chopping down of anything or anyone. Jesus had arrived and his ministry had begun, but he did *not* come bearing the ax or winnowing fork that John had predicted. Instead, he began healing the sick, casting out demons, and spending a lot of time with the very people many thought were part of the problem. John asks on behalf of his community, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” (Matthew 11:3).

John’s hope (and ours) is not in vain. But this Messiah’s redemption will not come in the way we expect. This Messiah is not a victor in a battle scene or a political coup. Instead, this Messiah is one who shows that greatness and strength are actually found in gentleness and service. It isn’t through fire that God saves the world; it is through God’s own sacrificial love. And the road to this love is not a victory parade, but the one that leads us humbly to a cleansing bath and a laden table.

To those who trust in wealth and power to set things right, what we do each Sunday must sound silly: gathering around old stories, singing and praying, sharing a little meal. How could any of this change anything? But for us wilderness wanderers, it is water in the desert. It is the very presence of God in our midst. Thanks be to God!