

First Sunday of Advent
November 28th at 10:00 a.m.
Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know that this is so?"
Luke 1:18a

Greeting and Welcome

Prelude Music "Lo How a Rose E're Blooming/To a Wild Rose" Arr. W. Lee Jonathan. *Used with permission under CCLI License #11306163.*

Choral Introit "Prepare the Way of the Lord" by Jacques Bertier and the Community of Taize. *Used with permission under CCLI License #11306163.*

Call to Worship

Children of God: Let us praise our God.

We gather in the grace and peace of God.

When we pray, God is always listening.

We pray not only for change but to be changed.

We are confident that when we pray, God is with us.

When God is with us, everything changes.

Break Through: United Methodists of Greater New Jersey

Opening Prayer

Eternal God, you have assured us that you are with us. You will strengthen us and help us. God you are present, living, and active in our lives- not only present, but you are rejoicing in us and calming us with your love. When the future is uncertain, trusting the power of your love is sustaining. We commit our desires to you. We will wait on you to move. Thank you for keeping us in perfect peace. We praise you for your presence and put our trust in you! In Jesus name, AMEN.

Break Through: United Methodists of Greater New Jersey

Lighting of the Advent Candles

Reader 1: On this first Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of HOPE. HOPE is a voice that sings out from broken places. When, like Zechariah, we cannot speak due to fear or doubt or bewilderment, HOPE holds onto us and keeps us moving toward a future we can't yet see. HOPE carries us as we carry our burdens. HOPE grows from the promise that God is with us.

Sung Response: "Emmanuel, Emmanuel" UMH #204. Used with permission under CCLI License #11306163

Emmanuel, Emmanuel,

His name is called Emmanuel.

God with us, revealed in us,

His name is called Emmanuel.

Reader 2: Let us pray: Gracious One, Give us HOPE that sings out beyond skepticism, cynicism, and frustration. May your presence minister to us when we are at a loss for words. May your presence speak through us in wordless ways. May we notice you truly with us, here and now. AMEN.

Break Through: United Methodists of Greater New Jersey

Hymn of Praise “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” UMH #211. Words: 9th cent, Latin; trans; Henry Sloane Coffin, 1916. Music: 15th Cent. French, arr. by Thomas Helmore, 1854 *Used with permission under CCLI License #11306163.*

- 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 thee, O Israel.

- 2. O come, thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go.**

Refrain

- 3. O come, O come, great Lord of might, who to thy tribes on Sinai’s height
In ancient times once gave the law in cloud and majesty in awe.**

Refrain

- 4. O come, though Root of Jesse’s tree, and ensign of thy people be;
Before thee rulers silent fall; all peoples on thy mercy call.**

Refrain

Anthem “Canticle for Advent” Arr. Lloyd Larson. *Used with permission under CCLI License #11306163.*

Gospel Reading Luke 1:5-25, 57-64 (NRSV)

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years. Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. Now at this time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people were praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Zechariah said to the angel, “How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.” The angel replied, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the days these things occur.” Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. When his time of service

was ended, he went to his home. After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people." ... Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, "No, he is to be called John." They said to her, "None of your relatives have this name." Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to ask him. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed.

The word of God for the people of God
Thanks be to God

Sermon "God with Zechariah: God with the Skeptic" by Sherry Hietpas

Response to the Word

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David,

As he spoke the mouth of the prophets of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant,

The oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Hymn "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" UMH #127. Words: William Williams, 1745. Music: John Hughes, 1907. *Used with permission under CCLI License #11306163.*

1. Guide me, O Though great Jehovah

Pilgrim through this barren land.

I am weak, but thou art mighty;

Hold me with thy powerful hand.

Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,

Feed me till I want no more.

Feed me till I want no more.

2. Open now the crystal fountain

Whence the healing streams doth flow

Let the fire and cloudy pillar

Lead me all my journey through.

Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,

**Be thou still my strength and shield
Be thou still my strength and shield.**

- 3. When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell's destruction
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to thee
I will ever give to thee.**

Prayers of the People

Giving of our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory "Gentle Mary Laid Her Child" by Bell Choir

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**Praise God from Whom all Blessings flow!
Praise God all creatures here below!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Sending Forth Hymn "Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus" UMH #196. Words: Charles Wesley, 1744
Music: Rowland H. Prichard, 1830. Used with permission under CCLI License #11306163.

- 1. Come, thou long expected Jess, 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 desires of every nation, joy of every longing heart.**
- 2. 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 us to thy glorious throne.**

Benediction

Postlude "Go Tell It On the Mountain" Arr. D. Calhoun. *Used with permission under CCLI License #11306163.*