

**SERVICE INFORMATION: DECEMBER 12, 2021**  
**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON**  
**Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church**

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: Krista Johnson and Praise Team

HYMNS AND LITURGY: Rebekah Olson

READER:

THEME: Waiting on the Lord

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson

**CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 85**

**You showed favor to your land, O LORD; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. 2 You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. Selah 3 You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger. 4 Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us. 5 Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? 6 Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? 7 Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation. 8 I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints--but let them not return to folly. 9 Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. 10 Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. 11 Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. 12 The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. 13 Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.**

**HYMN #24 "It Came upon the Midnight Clear"**

**CONFESSION OF SIN: *Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy and ask You for Christ's sake, grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.***

**PRAYER**

**ADVENT CANDLE READING**

**CHILDREN'S MESSAGE:**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Zephaniah 3:14-20 Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem! 15 The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. 16 On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. 17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." 18 "The sorrows for the appointed feasts I will remove from you; they are a burden and a reproach to you. 19 At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they were put***

to shame. 20 At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD.

**GOSPEL LESSON:** *Luke 7:18-28 John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, 19 he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" 20 When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'" 21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 22 So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. 23 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." 24 After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 25 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' 28 I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."*

**READER:** Here ends the reading of God's Word.

**CONGREGATION SINGS:** God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

**CONFESSION OF FAITH:** I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

**GLORIA PATRI:** *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING**

**PRAISE SONGS:** songs chosen by Krista...sung by "Praise team...Luke, Krista, Jacob, Hannah, Marretta, etc.)

**SERMON TITLE: "WAITING FOR GOD TO DO SOMETHING"**

**Philippians 4:4-7; Pastor Tom Olson; December 12, 2021**

*Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen*

**INTRODUCTION:** A big part of the Christmas message is about waiting for the Lord to do something. It had been 400 years of silence since the last prophet spoke of God sending them a Messiah. Then instead of giving them a King, He gave them a baby and there was more waiting. When He was old enough to become King, they tried to make Him King by force. He refused and told them that His Kingdom is not of this world, more waiting. People don't like to wait so they killed him. But He rose from the dead, told them about His wonderful future plans, ascended into heaven and left us for two thousand years. And we continue to wait. Dark powers still are at work. Some have given up and have quit waiting. Others of us stand by his word and

wait. We know God has a different definition of soon. He measures one thousand years as a day, so from His point of view He has only been gone two days. Our clock has minutes and hours on it that tick away. His clock has only one pointer and two marks on it. One says “the wrong time” and the other says “the right time.” Years and centuries mean nothing to the eternal God. He doesn’t operate on clock time; He operates on the RIGHT TIME.

THE CONTEXT: The context of today’s epistle lesson is this: The Apostle Paul is sitting in a terrible Roman prison cell on death row, waiting for help to come from the Lord. That help did not come to him in the way we would want to be helped. There was no earthquake causing the prison doors to swing open like it did for he and Silas when they were in the custody of the Philippian jailer. This time God was silent. But He waited and did not waver from believing the promises of God. In our Old Testament reading the people were waiting for God to deliver them from their enemies. It was tempting to give up on God. In our Gospel Lesson, John was waiting for help in prison. It was tempting to give up on Jesus who let him stay there until they cut his head off.

Perhaps you are waiting...for help, for healing, for companionship, for finances, for encouragement...and God seems so silent and deliverance evades you. We can’t forget that heaven is our home, not earth. We can’t forget that we are in a war with the world system. Pearl Harbor Hawaii is an island paradise but on December 7, 1941 it became a war zone of death and destruction. That is a picture of our lives. Sometimes it seems that we are in paradise and other times we are under attack and we cry out to God for help and we wait for it to come. What we need to learn is how to wait when our clock is ticking and God’s clock pointer has not yet moved to the words, “The Right Time.” Let’s learn how to “WAIT FOR GOD TO DO SOMETHING” from the Apostle Paul, sitting in jail, waiting to be put to death.

## I. JOYFUL WAITING

*Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*

REJOICE: This is pink candle Sunday, our theme turns from repentance to joy. The first step to healthy waiting on God is to rejoice. You may say, I can’t rejoice, my situation is too painful. Paul tells us here what to rejoice in: “**Rejoice in the Lord!**” We can always rejoice in the Christmas message, “**God sent His Son into the world to save us from our sins.**” We can rejoice in the cross where our sins were paid for and we were made children of God and heirs of heaven. *Galatians 6:14* “**May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**” We can rejoice in the promise of Jesus coming back. *John 14:3* **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.** Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4 to comfort each other with the reminder that Jesus is coming back to raise the dead and rapture up His church to meet Him in the air and be with Him forever. I look for that to happen any day; rejoice that it will happen and maybe soon.

There are times in our lives when the outward things are taken away. Terminal illness and old age do a good job of that. Paul in Philippians has nothing of this world left, Israel in our Old Testament is languishing under the oppression of enemies. For four hundred years they were under the thumb of Greece and Rome. John the Baptist was on death row in a terrible prison with nothing of this world to hope for. But they all could rejoice in the Lord. They could rejoice that the deaf could hear, the lame could walk, the dead came back to life and the people had the good news of the gospel preached to them. We all can rejoice in the cross, the empty tomb and the expected return of Jesus. So AS WE WAIT FOR GOD TO DO SOMETHING, we rejoice in the Lord. JOYFUL WAITING.

## II. GENTLE WAITING

*Philippians 4:5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

GENTLE: What is gentle waiting? It is full surrender to the sovereign hand and the perfect will of God for your life. Surrender is the only way to peace. When Germany and Japan surrendered to the Allies in WW2, they got peace and entered into one of the most prosperous eras in their history. They were no longer conquering others. They were minding their business and received the abundant protection and provision of benevolent victors in the war. Today they are prosperous, peaceful and beautiful lands. But GENTLENESS is the key.

INTIMACY: Notice he says here *“the Lord is near.”* As we wait for the Lord, we do well to draw near to him. Even in the quietest times in history when it seems He is silent, God will reveal himself to those who draw near to him. Almost no one was hearing from the Lord when Jesus was born. But there were a few. There were the shepherds, the wise men and Simeon and Anna, the old people in the temple. They all were listening and they all heard from God. God has promised us in *James 4:8 “Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”* It is a very simple recipe to hear from God and be filled with the Holy Spirit: TURN AWAY FROM SIN AND PURSUE GOD. I am quite certain that the Apostle Paul had amazing experiences of intimacy with God in that prison cell. When I had COVID I turned from sin and spent time in prayer. I felt closer to God and to my wife and family than I do during busy and prosperous times of material blessing. As we WAIT FOR GOD TO DO SOMETHING, we wait with JOYFUL WAITING AND GENTLE WAITING. And we wait with...

### III. PRAYERFUL WAITING

*Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

RAY: I had a wonderful visit with Ray Bester on Tuesday. I am enjoying being healthy and able to visit our shut ins again. Ray has given up his apartment and possessions to live in the nursing home. He has a well-worn Bible on his table under a magnifier where he seeks God in the Word and prayer. I reminded him that he may be accomplishing more in prayer at age 100 than he ever did at the height of his strength.

OTHERS: Alfred, Lord Tennyson was an English poet who lived from 1809 until 1892. He stated: *‘More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.’* Suzie Larson from KGBI radio at the University of Northwestern in Roseville adds this excellent comment to Tennyson’s quote: *“Even today, we are walking in, standing on, and surrounded by answers to prayers prayed in the past by us and by others.”* We need a new generation of prayer warriors and God is raising them up to take the place of those in glory: Janette Flogstad, Nellie Sealy, Arvid and Sue Erickson and others who cannot come like Ray Bester, Gloria Conrad, Rosemary Young and so many other people who have learned to press into the mercy seat of God in prayer. One of the greatest poems ever written about prayer is in our hymnal and called “From Every Stormy Wind That Blows.” PRAYERFUL WAITING. Let me read it to you:

1 From every stormy wind that blows,  
From every swelling tide of woes,  
There is a calm, a sure retreat:  
'Tis found beneath the mercy seat.

2 There is a place where Jesus sheds  
The oil of gladness on our heads;  
A place than all beside more sweet:  
It is the blood-bought mercy seat.

3 There is a scene where spirits blend,  
Where friend holds fellowship with friend;  
Though sundered far, by faith they meet  
Around one common mercy seat.

4 Ah! Whither could we flee for aid  
When tempted, desolate, dismay,  
Or how the hosts of hell defeat  
Had suffering saints no mercy seat.

5 And there on eagle wings we soar,  
Where sin and sense molest no more;  
And heaven comes down our souls to greet,  
And glory crowns the mercy seat.

We wait for God to do something. We wait in prayer. JOYFUL WAITING, GENTLE WAITING, PRAYERFUL WAITING and finally...

#### IV. PEACEFUL WAITING

***Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

When a person dies, we often say, "Rest in peace." We know that the child of God who dies, instantly enters the presence of God and is fully at peace. Peace is the overwhelming condition of heaven. That same peace is available right here and right now. But it comes only one way, death...death to self and absolute trust in the all powerful God who has everything under control. Paul tells us here that if we learn to WAIT JOYFULLY, GENTLY AND PRAYERFULLY, that God will give us a peace that surpasses all human comprehension. He says that this peace will GUARD OUR HEARTS AND GUARD OUR MINDS. The last three words are key: IN CHRIST JESUS. It is all about knowing Jesus, walking close to Jesus, believing His promises, thinking about what he did for us on the cross, dwelling on the fact that he is preparing a place for us in heaven and coming back to get us and rejoicing in his return to rule the world in peace, forever and ever.

Consider what the archangel Gabriel told this to Mary when he announced that she would be the mother of God's son: ***Luke 1:31-33 Behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end!*** Now that is the kind of announcement that floods me with peace. Everything is working out and we have so much to look forward to in heaven when we die. We have so much to look forward to on earth when Jesus comes back. If dead believers can rest in peace, living believers can also rest in peace if we rejoice, trust, pray and wait patiently. God is at work and big things are going to happen at the right time. One day, maybe soon, will be the right time. Until then we wait with great anticipation and we keep sharing the gospel with whosoever will listen.

**SHEPHERDS KEEPING VIGIL:** The Shepherds are the prime example of those who watch and wait. They do a lot of watching and waiting. Imagine being a shepherd and watching your sheep all day and all night. You watch and wait and rest and work...always watching, always waiting, always alert...and they were the ones the angels came to with the announcement of a newborn King. Perhaps that is why the Lord says he is coming back

for ***“all who have longed for his appearing.”*** **2 Timothy 4:8** And remember the promise for those who wait for the Lord joyfully, gently, prayerfully and peacefully. **Isaiah 40:31** ***“They that wait upon the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”*** That is what happens when we WAIT FOR THE LORD TO DO SOMETHING. Amen

**HYMN #36 “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”**

**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 that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

**DOXOLOGY with Three-fold Amen**

**POSTLUDE:** Rebekah Olson

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** *Zephaniah 3:14-20 Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem! 15 The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. 16 On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. 17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." 18 "The sorrows for the appointed feasts I will remove from you; they are a burden and a reproach to you. 19 At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they were put to shame. 20 At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD.*

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