

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING LITURGY – 3RD ADVENT – 12/12/21

***PASTOR:** EVERY STORY HAS A BEGINNING. FOR THOSE OF US WHO WALK WITHIN THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION, THE STORY BEGINS ... WELL, AT THE BEGINNING!

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I CAN ONLY TRACE MY LINEAGE BACK A FEW GENERATIONS. MY BLOODLINE IS AN AMALGAMATION OF CULTURES THAT CAME TOGETHER THROUGH THE GIFTS OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE.

LOOKING AT MY FAMILY TREE, ONE WOULD FIND SCOT-IRISH, ENGLISH, AND NATIVE AMERICAN. BUT MY RELIGIOUS LINEAGE IS STRICTLY CHRISTIAN.

WHEN THE STORY OF OUR FAITH FLIPS FROM HEBREW SCRIPTURE TO THE GOSPELS, WE ARE MORE FORMALLY INTRODUCED TO A NEW PERSON OF THE TRINITY – JESUS. AND I USE THAT WORD, "FORMALLY" BECAUSE AS THE FAMILIAR FIRST LINES OF JOHN'S GOSPEL SUGGEST, JESUS WAS WITH GOD EVEN FROM THE BEGINNING.

A QUICK READ FROM GENESIS ... AS WELL ... TELLS US THAT WHEN GOD CREATED HUMANKIND, GOD SAID ... LET US MAKE HUMANKIND IN OUR IMAGE, ACCORDING TO OUR LIKENESS. NOTE THE PLURAL IN THOSE VERSES ... IN OTHER WORDS, GOD WAS NOT "IN IT" ALONE.

SO NOW ... MY FRIENDS ... ON THIS THIRD SUNDAY OF THE ADVENT SEASON ... LET US OPEN OUR HEARTS ONCE AGAIN TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE GOD OF US ALL ... AND LET US BEGIN, AT THE BEGINNING!

***CANDLE LIGHTER #1:** PROPHECY!

***CANDLE LIGHTER #2:** YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER;

A SCEPTER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE SCEPTOR OF YOUR KINGDOM.

YOU LOVE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATE WICKEDNESS;

THEREFORE, GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS MORE THAN YOUR COMPANIONS. – PSALM 45:6-7

***PASTOR:** AN UNMISTAKABLE SENSE OF JOY FILLS THE AIR.

THE CROWDS' EXCITED ANTICIPATION IS UNMISTAKABLE.

EVERYONE IN THE REALM IS JOINING IN THIS CELEBRATION OF THE KING'S REIGN!

THE ALMIGHTY GOD HAS ANOINTED JESUS, OUR SAVIOR, TO RULE – WITH JUSTICE AND UPRIGHTNESS – OVER ALL HISTORY.

AS HE REIGNS FOR ETERNITY WITH UNWAVERING AND HOLY RIGHTEOUSNESS, KING JESUS WILL BRING JOY AND GLADNESS TO HIS PEOPLE AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, GLORY AND HONOR TO HIS FATHER.

THE KING OF KINGS AND THE LORD OF LORDS WILL COME AS A BRIDEGROOM SEEKING HIS BRIDE TO REIGN FOREVER – WITH JOY AND GLADNESS!

***CANDLE LIGHTER #2:** FULFILLMENT!

***CANDLE LIGHTER #1:** YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING, LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS.

THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN;

AND THEY WILL ALL GROW OLD LIKE A GARMENT; LIKE A CLOAK YOU WILL FOLD THEM UP,

AND THEY WILL BE CHANGED.

BUT YOU ARE THE SAME. – HEBREWS 1:10-12

***PASTOR:** FROM THE BEGINNING OF TIME, JESUS HAS BEEN PRESENT.

HE WAS WITH THE FATHER AND THE SPIRIT WHEN THE EARTH WAS FORMED AND THE WATERS WERE SEPARATED FROM THE LAND.

THROUGH THE MILLENIA, LANDFORMS HAVE CHANGED;

IN THE COURSE OF A YEAR, SEASONS COME AND GO.

IN CONTRAST TO THIS CONSTANT CHANGE, JESUS HAS REMAINED AND WILL FOREVER REMAIN THE SAME: HOLY, GOOD, STRONG, LOVING, FAITHFUL, POWERFUL, AND WISE.

SO AS THE EVENTS OF THE WORLD AND THE DETAILS OF LIFE WHIRL AROUND US, WE KNOW THAT JESUS WILL NOT CHANGE.

HE IS A ROCK, AND HE WILL NEVER FAIL US.

***CANDLE LIGHTER #1:** PROMISE!

***CANDLE LIGHTER #2:** IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD.

HE WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD.

ALL THINGS WERE MADE THROUGH HIM, AND WITHOUT HIM, NOTHING WAS MADE THAT WAS MADE.

IN HIM WAS LIFE, AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF ALL.

AND THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS, AND THE DARKNESS DID NOT COMPREHEND IT ...

AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US, AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY,

THE GLORY OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.

JOHN 1:1-5, 14

***PASTOR:** HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED A ONE OF A KIND GIFT?

SOMETHING UNIQUE, COMPLETELY UNLIKE ANYTHING YOU HAVE EVER SEEN OR EVEN HEARD OF?

WHEN THE APOSTLE JOHN REFERRED TO JESUS AS THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, THE ORIGINAL GREEK MEANS UNIQUE OR ONE OF A KIND.

AND AS GOD'S GIFT TO US, JESUS – WHO IS BOTH FULLY GOD AND FULLY HUMAN – IS INDEED, UNIQUE!

YES, AS THE LAMB OF GOD WHO DIED ON THE CROSS ON BEHALF OF SINFUL HUMANITY, JESUS IS NOT A GIFT TO BE HOARDED.

SO WHAT WILL YOU DO TO SHARE YOUR ONE OF A KIND GIFT OF JESUS WITH SOMEONE ELSE, THIS SEASON?

***CANDLE LIGHTER #1:** (IN SILENCE, LIGHT PURPLE CANDLE #1, PURPLE CANDLE #2, AND THE PINK CANDLE #3)