

Prelude

Welcome

Process with light

“Heaven and Nature Sing” (*sung as call and response*)

Sing a new song to the Lord/Sing a new song to the Lord
Lift your hearts with gratitude/Lift your hearts with gratitude
Sing a new song to the Lord/Sing a new song to the Lord
Lift your hearts with gratitude/Lift your hearts with gratitude
and Joy,/and Joy
Unabashed Joy/Unabashed Joy

Your steadfast love and faithfulness/Your steadfast love and faithfulness
is ever present in our lives/is ever present in our lives
Your steadfast love and faithfulness/Your steadfast love and faithfulness
is ever present in our lives/is ever present in our lives
with Joy,/with Joy
Unabashed Joy/Unabashed Joy

Reading

Let the voices of all people blend in harmony,
in unison let the people magnify the Beloved!

Sung call and response continue

We sing/We sing
We sing/We sing
Joy to the World/Joy to the World
Heaven and nature sing/Heaven and nature sing
Joy to the World/Joy to the World
Heaven and nature sing/Heaven and nature sing
with Joy/with Joy
Unabashed Joy/Unabashed Joy

Advent Candle Lighting

We continue our journey toward Christmas this week. Last week we lit the candles of Hopeful Joy and Loving Joy. This week we in addition to lighting these candles we will light the candle of Unabashed Joy.

Today will remind us that joy is not just about “happiness.” Many people through the ages had joy in the middle of what was really awful circumstances, times when hatred was pointed at them and unfair or even violent treatment was perpetrated against them. It’s like they said to those who were oppressing them, “YOU cannot take away my joy because YOU didn’t give it to me... God gave us this joy, God is our joy, and it is deep within us and ours forever.” Witnessing that kind of joy changes you. And that’s WHY we should all be full of joy... absolutely “unabashed” joy...

Joy is not a luxury item, it is the right of all people and all creation.

So today we light the candles of Hopeful Joy, Loving Joy and Unabashed Joy.

Prayer

Let us pray:

Holy God, you provide the source of our joy.

It runs deep and wide underneath all of life.

When we are tempted to depend on others for happiness,

draw us back to you, for you are the Light that shines for us always.

Help us to shine that light from within us through our own Unabashed Joy.

Let us make your blessings known in our hearts this day.

Let us make your blessings known in our church this day.

Let us make your blessings known in the world this day...

in the name of Joy.

Amen.

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Reprise call and response

We sing/We sing

We sing/We sing

Joy to the World/Joy to the World

Heaven and nature sing/Heaven and nature sing

Joy to the World/Joy to the World

Heaven and nature sing/Heaven and nature sing

with Joy/with Joy

Unabashed Joy/Unabashed Joy

Children’s Time

Word in Song:

Chancel Choir

Sacred Reading

The vision of joy offered in Isaiah is one in which all things of heaven and nature, plant, animal, human, are set free in the Reign of God.

“The desert and the dry land will be glad;
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the crocus.
They will burst into bloom,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
They will receive the glory of Lebanon,
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon.
They will see the Holy One’s glory,
the splendor of our God.
Strengthen the weak hands,
and support the unsteady knees.
Say to those who are panicking:
“Be strong! Don’t fear!
Here’s your God,
coming with vengeance;
with divine retribution
God will come to save you.”

Then the eyes of [those who cannot see] will be opened,
and the ears of [those who cannot hear] will be cleared.
Then [those who cannot move] will leap like the deer,
and the tongue of [those who cannot make a sound] will sing.
Waters will spring up in the desert,
and streams in the wilderness.
The burning sand will become a pool,
and the thirsty ground, fountains of water.
The jackals’ habitat, a pasture;
grass will become reeds and rushes....

The Holy One’s ransomed ones will return and enter Zion with
singing,
with everlasting joy upon their heads.

Happiness and joy will overwhelm them;
grief and groaning will flee away.”

In our next scripture, we see that Joy doesn't wait for struggle to be over. Mary “rejoices” in the iconic scripture passage during her pregnancy, a state of affairs that would have put her in a position of dishonor among her people. Instead, she sings out powerfully because she knows that this turn of events will usher in the Presence of justice for people who are oppressed and freedom for people held captive.

‘My soul magnifies the Holy One,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for God has looked with favor on the lowliness of this servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is God's name.
God's mercy is for those who fear God
from generation to generation.
God has shown strength with God's arm;
has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
God has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
God has helped God's servant Israel,
in remembrance of God's mercy,
according to the promise God made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.’

For the wisdom contained in these holy words we give thanks. Amen.

Sermon Rev. Wendy Bruner

Hymn Hymnal “127 “Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”

Prayers of the People (Lord's Prayer in front of binder)

How Shall We Do God's Work in the World

Hymnal #514 "Over My Head"

Prayer of Dedication (in front of binder)

Gracious God, we give thanks.

We ask your blessings on these gifts of time,
talent, and treasure as we use them to do

Your work in the world. Amen

Hymn Binder #12 "For Everyone Born"

Benediction

Postlude