

# Presbyterian Church of Henderson

Worship Service 10:00 AM

November 29, 2020

*The Good News of Emmanuel*

## Ring of the Bell

**Welcome and Announcements** Pastor Eric Hoey

**Organ Prelude** Kristin Jones, Director of Music

## Lighting of the Advent Candle - HOPE

Cindy Thweatt

Cynthia Hoey

## \*Call to Worship

O that God would tear open the heavens and come down!

**Of that day or hour, no one knows, only God.**

Be alert! Keep awake! The time is drawing near:

**The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**

## \*Hymn PH 2 "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"

1 Come, Thou long expected Jesus,  
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 Desire 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.

## \*Call to Confession

Like a faded, dry leaf that the wind blows away, our sins dry us up; faded and brittle, we are carried off by the wrongs we have done. Yet God loves us still and is able to restore and renew us with the water of life.

## \*Prayer of Confession (unison)

**God-with-us, even in Advent, we confess that you can seem far away. You are hidden when we need you near. In our hurt, doubt, and fear, we do not try to draw closer to you; instead, we lash out—against you, our neighbor, even those we love. Forgive us, we pray, and come to save us! Let your face shine until our tears are dried, our sins are faded, and our hope is restored. After all, we belong to you, and in your hands, we can be made new. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

## \*Assurance of Pardon

The grace of God, given to us in Christ Jesus, strengthens us to the end so that we may be blameless when Christ comes again. Thanks be to God, who is faithful and has called us into the fellowship of the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord!

## \*Passing the Peace

Please turn and bow to someone out of respect and love— “The peace of Christ be with you”

**\*Gloria Patri** (PH 579)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

**Prayer for Illumination**

Gracious God, heaven and earth will pass away, but your words will not pass away: Your Word stands forever. May our generation be attentive so that, by the power of your Holy Spirit, we remember your ways and gladly do right, meeting you wherever and whenever you appear. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

**First Reading**      Isaiah 64:1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

**Special Music**      “God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen”  
Susan Thomas, piano

**Second Reading**      Luke 1:30-56

The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was

filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

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

And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

### **Children's Sermon**      Pastor Eric

- There is an emoji with a person that has crossed arms like this.
- What does that mean? "NO, or no good"
- The opposite of this would be open arms or hands? "Let me give you a big hug" - it is being open and vulnerable. It is an expression of celebration or praise.
- In our Bible text today, we are learning about the angel appearing to Mary informing that she is going to become pregnant with Jesus.
- Do you think Mary got so scared and said, "NO!" To God?
- In fact quite the opposite, she said, "let it be with me according to your word" - this means yes, open arms,
- So when God calls you to share your lunch, rather than saying no! You say, "yes"
- When God calls you to tell the truth, rather than say NO, you say, YES
- When God calls you to welcome a friend...
- When God calls you to be nice to a person...
- When God calls you to pray for your teacher...
- When God calls you to do your homework...
- ....listen to your parents....

### **SERMON**      "Finding HOPE in the Emmanuel"

Luke 1:30-56

November 29, 2020

- Rev Doug Blair passing

#### INTRO:

ILL: A story is told at a university there was a piano teacher that was simply and affectionately known as 'Herman.' One night at a university concert, a distinguished visiting piano player suddenly became ill while performing an extremely difficult piece. No sooner had the artist retired from the stage when Herman rose from his seat in the audience, walked onstage, sat down at the piano and with great mastery completed the performance. Later that evening, at a party, one of the students asked Herman how he was able to perform such a demanding piece so beautifully without notice and with no rehearsal. He replied, 'In 1939, when I was a budding young concert pianist, I was

arrested and placed in a Nazi concentration camp. Putting it mildly, the future looked bleak. But I knew that in order to keep the flicker of hope alive that I might someday play again, I needed to practice every day. I began by fingering a piece from my repertoire on my bare board bed late one night. The next night I added a second piece and soon I was running through my entire repertoire. I did this every night for five years. It so happens that the piece I played tonight at the concert hall was part of that repertoire. That constant practice is what kept my hope alive. Everyday I renewed my hope that I would one day be able to play my music again on a real piano, and in freedom.

- Hope is one of the most incredible human responses.
- It has kept people alive when the conditions of life were almost unbearable.
- Everybody today needs hope especially in this period of a global pandemic.
- The Bible reminds us that wherever you find life, there is hope.
- *Eccl. 9:4 Anyone who is among the living has hope*
- K.A. Kitchen in his article on hope in the New International Standard Encyclopedia, he writes, "Hope is also the mark of human limitation. It is a testimony to man's humility in the face of his finiteness."
- Wouldn't you say that in the midst of COVID-19 we have seen our own finiteness?
- We need hope more now than ever especially as we see rising statistics in COVID cases like never before!
- This morning I wanted to open our Advent series on "The Good News of Emmanuel" with the HOPE of God with Us.
- Emmanuel means God with us!
- The fact that Jesus came down from heaven to "be with us" is indeed a message of hope.
- Each week as we light the advent candle, the association of each theme: hope, peace, joy, and love will be the emphasis of the Good News of Emmanuel.
- Today we look at the Luke's text of Mary's discovery that she was going to carry the Son of God and draw some principles on how the Emmanuel gave Mary HOPE and how the Emmanuel give us HOPE today.

Finding HoOPE in the Emmanuel

### **1. Realize that God is at Work** (vv. 30-37)

- In Mary's situation, God enters into her life and adds a little stress and anxiety so that she would have to recognize her finiteness and rely upon God.
- God says to Mary in verse 34, "You will be with child...The Holy Spirit will come upon you"
- Mary is a faithful Jewish woman.
- But it is not every day that the God breaks into her world to make this important announcement.
- Mary had to either see this as a promise and fulfillment of God working within her or she could respond in stress and anxiety
- I don't know about you, but to find out that you are going to become pregnant by the Holy Spirit in your engagement to this young man named Joseph is very stressful.
- Can you imagine trying to explain that to people during the remainder of your engagement?
- Often our HOPELESS situations are a failure to see that God is at work with you every step of the way.

- When your world seems like it is crashing inward, and you cannot not stand to bear the pressure any longer, remember that God is a God of comfort.
- Maybe your current situation is God's way of getting your attention so that God can demonstrate His hope in you.
- *Psa. 42:11 Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.*
- *Psa. 62:5 Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.*
- What is your hopeless situation that you are experiencing right now?
  - Marriage that has no hope
  - Parenting situation that you not able to handle
  - Financial crisis forcing you to rethink another job
  - Holiday family tensions that re-appear every year after year.
  - Maybe as a student your grades have not been very good because you have been focused upon other things
  - Friendship or relationship that is strained because of something that someone had said
  - Health problems and living is simply one day at a time
- Well, the good news that comes from this text today is in v. 30 "Do not be afraid!"
- Jumping down to v. 37 "for Nothing will be impossible with God."
- In the midst of this particular pandemic, God wants to show you that He is orchestrating your most impossible situation to demonstrate that He is in control.
- The encouragement to you today is "Do not be afraid. Stop worrying! Nothing is impossible with God."

## **1. Realize that God is at Work**

### **2. Trust God with Things Beyond Your Control (v. 38)**

*Luke 1:38 "Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.*

- God promises to Mary that not only that she will conceive a child, but the child is going to be the savior of the world.
- Look back at what was told to her:  
*32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*
- This is a double surprise: a child without intercourse and a child who will be Son of the most High
- I can see Mary's friends asking Mary:
  - "Mary aren't you worried about what people will say?"
  - "How are YOU going to give birth to leader where His Kingdom will have no end?"
  - "Mary do you realize the pain and the challenges before you?"
  - "Mary are you out of your mind! This is biologically impossible?!"
- Mary was not given a choice in the matter
  - In Mary's response,
  - "Here am I, the servant of the Lord," ---She recognizes her identity as the Lord's servant--that means she yielded to God's divine control
  - "let it be with me according to your word" ---Trusted God implicitly.
  - There was not even a hint of doubt in her trust in God.
- Have you ever implicitly trusted God in a certain situation?

ILL: When God called me to serve here in Henderson, had previously worked at the national offices in Louisville for about 8 years, and suddenly lost my job. I started working as a barista at Starbucks as I tried to figure out what I want to do with my life. After about a year of coffee, I received a call from this church asking me to be the interim pastor that was two hours drive away. After my experiences with the national church, I was hesitant to work in a local church, but I needed to be in a place to be where I could serve and be loved by the people of God. I had to trust God with this decision, and I am so blessed to be serving here.

### **1. Realize that God is at Work**

### **2. Trust God with Things Beyond Your Control**

### **3. Find Mutual Support** (v. 39-45)

*Luke 1:39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea,*

- By the way, Mary's journey was not down the street, but must have been 50-70 miles from Nazareth to Zechariah's home in Judea. This was a major trip for Mary.
- Q: Why did she go?
- *Luke 1:36-37 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."*
- She went to be with relatives, but more than that she went to go find mutual support.
- She went to see how God did the impossible in Elizabeth and be affirmed that God will also see her through her current circumstances
- Mutual support is all about seeing how God is working in other people's lives and having the support that God will see you through your own challenging situations
- There is nothing more difficult than trying to have hope in isolation.
- We can all testify to the truth of the difficulty of living through COVID in isolation
- God made us to be in community of each other.
- We cannot grow into the people God wants us to be without being in community with others.
- Faith may be quite a personal but during difficult times we need each other.
- Ill: "I wish my teacher knew I don't have a friend to play with me."  
"I wish my teacher knew I don't have pencils at home to do my homework."  
"I wish my teacher knew how much I miss my dad because he got deported to Mexico when I was 3 years old ..."  
"I wish my teacher knew sometimes my reading log is not signed because my mom is not around a lot."

These are just a few of the heart wrenching notes which Kyle Schwartz, a 3rd grade teacher at Doull Elementary School in Denver, CO, received from her students. The notes were in response to an assignment which Schwartz designed in an effort to better know her students and their needs. The instructions were simple: Complete this thought--I wish my teacher knew ...

"As a new teacher, I struggled to understand the reality of my students' lives and how to best support them. I just felt like there was something I didn't know about my students."

Students were given the choice to remain anonymous or sign their names if they felt comfortable. Most not only signed their names, but were willing (anxious even) to read their responses in front of the class.

"Building community in my classroom is a major goal of this lesson. After one student shared that she had no one to play with at recess, the rest of the class chimed in and said, 'we got your back.' The next day during recess, I noticed she was playing with a group of girls. **Not only can I support my students, but my students can support each other.**"

- In the same way, we humans need each other.
- Isolation from people who can offer love and support was never to be a part of our lives.
- The reason why there is so much hopelessness today is because of the privatization our society inflicts upon us, and the students at Ms. Schwartz, 3rd grade class can probably testify to that.
- We need each other.
- As Mary turned to her relative Elizabeth to find God in her situation, we can turn to brothers and sisters in Christ to spur one another onward to love and good deeds.

### **1. Realize that God is at Work**

### **2. Trust God with Things Beyond Your Control**

### **3. Find Mutual Support**

### **4. Yield to God's Purposes** (vv. 46-56)

- AS the two women share good news, Mary is inspired to utter this great hymn known as Mary's Song or the Magnificat.

*"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant."*

- Mary's song, commonly known as The Magnificat contains:
  - Praise God for what he has done (vv. 46-48)
  - Attributes of God (vv. 49-50)
  - God's sovereign actions (vv. 51-53)
  - Recall of God's mercy (vv. 54-56)
- The entire hymn is about GOD!
- Most of it is filled with OT allusions and quotations on how God has been faithful to Israel.
- Isn't that great to have a community that can point you to God in the midst of difficult circumstances?
- In this Song of Mary she realizes that she is a part of God's greater plan for her people, for the child to be born unto her will have a significant role for us and for all humanity.
- When you see yourself as a significant part of God's greater plan, Mary had no choice but to praise God and yield to God's purposes.

*Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. (vv. 48b-50)*

CONCLUSION:

- God's ultimate expression of hope is found in the birth of Jesus Christ  
*1Tim. 4:10 (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.*

## **Offering**

God has enriched us in every way—in speech, knowledge, and spiritual gifts. From the fellowship of Jesus Christ, we are sent out to share with thanksgiving what we have received.

- Today we begin to collect our pledge cards, please place those in the offering plates as you exit the sanctuary.

### **\*Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessing flow.

Praise Him all creatures here below.

Praise him above the heavenly host.

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

### **\*Prayer of Dedication**

Faithful God, we thank you that Christ is being revealed in every time and place until he comes again in the fullness of glory. Strengthen our testimony and spiritual gifts; increase generosity in us, we pray, as we wait for the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

## **\*Affirmation of Faith** (Apostle's Creed)

*Minister:*

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, what do you believe?

*All:*

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 Ghost, 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 sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

## **Prayers of the People**

God of power and glory, we remember your awesome deeds across the ages— the times you saved us and brought us home. Yet, we also remember times when we felt alone and afraid. O God, we are your people, the work of your hand. Look upon us with your shining face, especially in the time of need.

We pray for those who look to you for healing and hope ... those who are sick or recuperating from illness and injury ... those who are lonely and need companionship and care ... those for whom the holidays bring sorrow or pain ... those whose deep sadness overshadows joy. Let your face shine upon us, O God.

We pray for people in need of restoration and reconciliation: for those battling addictions and those in recovery ... for people estranged from those they love ... for someone lost in grief ... for someone far from home. Let your face shine upon us, O God, that we might be saved.

Renew the spirit of a world grown weary with waiting and hoping.

Especially we pray for wars to end, for hunger and poverty to be crowded out by abundance. And we pray, too, for the church because we also grow weary in our waiting and watching for your power and glory to be made known. Grant us clarity, passion, and true fellowship so that we are awake to your presence.

Let your face shine upon the church and all this weary world, we pray; in the name of the One born in a manger and coming again on clouds of glory, and now, with confidence as children of God, let us pray:

**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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever.  
Amen.

**\*Hymn** PH 8 "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"

1 Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates,  
Behold, the King of glory waits;  
The King of kings is drawing near;  
The Savior of the world is here!

2 Fling wide the portals of your heart;  
Make it a temple, set apart  
From earthly use for heaven's employ,  
Adorned with prayer and love and joy.

3 Redeemer, come! I open wide  
My heart to Thee: here, Lord, abide.  
Let me Thy inner presence feel;  
Thy grace and love in me reveal.

**\*Benediction**

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace both now and evermore.

**\*Organ Postlude** (please be seated for the postlude)