

Gettysburg United Methodist Church

December 3, 2020

Psalm 32

(NRSV)

Of David. A Maskil.

- 1 *Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.*
- 2 *Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*
- 3 *While I kept silence, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.*
- 4 *For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah*
- 5 *Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah*
- 6 *Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.*
- 7 *You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. Selah*
- 8 *I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*
- 9 *Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,*

else it will not stay near you.

10 *Many are the torments of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.*

11 *Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.*



Meditation

Read Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 2:4-20

Christmas is about journeys. Mary and Joseph journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born. The shepherds travel to Bethlehem to see the baby, as do the Magi some time later. After Jesus is born, Joseph and Mary take him to Jerusalem to be presented in the Temple. When the Magi leave, the Holy Family travels to Egypt to avoid persecution by Herod, and eventually returns to Nazareth. Christmas is about journeys

The journeys of Christmas center on Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. They are either journeys to Bethlehem to witness his birth, or journeys from Bethlehem after he is born. Our lives are full of spiritual journeys, and those journeys also focus on Bethlehem—or, more specifically, on Jesus, who was born there.

Our journeys begin as journeys to Bethlehem, journey
(Continued on page 2)

Journey to Bethlehem . . .

(Continued from page 1)

neys to Jesus. They begin as we feel a dissatisfaction with where we currently are—a spiritual hunger and thirst, an emptiness of heart, a sense of sinfulness and separation from God, a search for meaning and purpose, a sense of need for God's light in the darkness of the world. We're drawn to Jesus because he is the Light of the World. He is the incarnation of God's love; he is the one who died on the cross for our sins and rose from the grave on the third day; he is the one who reconciles us with God. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who guides us and brings us safely through the darkest valley. He is the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

We arrive in Bethlehem when we place our faith in Christ. We can only be saved by faith in him—it's not because of who we are, or anything we can do. (Eph. 2:8-10) By faith in Jesus Christ our sin is forgiven; by faith in him we are reconciled with God and receive abundant and eternal life in his name. The baby born in Bethlehem becomes the Savior born in our hearts as we are reborn by faith in him.

But our journey does not end in Bethlehem, even as Jesus remains at the center of our lives. Our journey continues beyond Bethlehem—only now we travel with Jesus, rather than to Jesus. When the shepherds left Bethlehem, they “spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child” (Luke 2:17). They glorified and praised God for all they had heard and seen (Luke 2:20). As we journey away from Bethlehem, we also praise and worship God, grow in our faith, and tell others the good news of Jesus as we show them his love.

When Mary and Joseph and the child fled from Bethlehem to Egypt (Matt. 2:14-18), they did so to escape King Herod, who recognized Jesus as a threat to his wicked rule. When we journey beyond Bethlehem, we bring the light of Christ to bear against the darkness of the world as we work for freedom with justice and equality for all people, and strive to end discrimination and oppression. We encounter Jesus anew every time we feed the

hungry, give water to the thirsty, welcome a stranger, give clothing to those in need, and visit those who are sick and in prison (Matt. 25: 31-46). We invite others to join us on the journey as we show them the way to Bethlehem, and walk with them as they grow in faith (Matt. 28:18-20).

Christmas is about journeys. As you consider the journeys of Christmas, think about your own life. Where are you on the journey? Are you on the way to Bethlehem? Have you arrived and placed your faith in Jesus? Are you moving with Christ beyond Bethlehem to make disciples and transform the world with God's love? As you travel, know that God's Holy Spirit is with you to guide, inspire, and lead. Know that you are always surrounded by God's grace and God's love.

—Pastor Rick

Prayer

Most loving God, we thank you for your presence with us on this journey. We thank you for the guidance of your Holy Spirit, and know that our center is in Christ. Bring us anew to Bethlehem to rejoice in his birth, fill our hearts with the joy of his presence, and lead us beyond Bethlehem to meet the needs of the world.

We pray for the homeless, the hungry, the despairing, the sick, and all who are in need. Bless them with your healing and wholeness. Comfort them with the peace of your Holy Spirit. We pray for those who suffer injustice, discrimination, and oppression. May your Spirit lead us to work for freedom and justice as you transform this world by your love.

Be with us as we walk together on the highway of faith. Make us one in the Spirit, and one in ministry to all the world. Lead us by your presence, that we may be the light of world in the darkness of these times; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Advent Sermons

(Sunday morning and Facebook)

11/29/2020	Luke 1:5-23	Zechariah: God's Surprises
12/6/2020	Luke 1:24-25, 39-45	Elizabeth: God's Blessings
12/13/2020	Matthew 1:18-25	Joseph: Doing the Right Thing
12/20/2020	Luke 1:26-38	Mary: Radical Obedience
12/27/2020	Luke 2:22-40	Simeon and Anna: Fulfillment



Crisis Hotlines and Helplines

During these trying times, it's good to be aware of some of the positive resources available in our community. Many people are under extraordinary stress because of the ongoing situation. Please feel free to share this information with others as you feel appropriate.

CONTACT Helpline: (800) 932-4616

Wellspan Behavioral Health Helpline (Philhaven): (800) 932-0359

TrueNorth Crisis Line: (866) 325-0339

Substance Abuse Hotline: (800) 662-4357

Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-7233

Adams-Hanover Crisis Information Referral Hotline: (717) 632-4900

Weekly Prayer Concerns

To add someone to this prayer list, please call the church office.

This week's list (as of 12/1/2020) is:

Joyce Dye
Rodney Truscott
Dale Shade—recovering from surgery
Penny Daugherty
Scott Bowers
Imogene Hunt's brother
Raymond Koenig (York Hospital)
Cathy Libera (shoulder surgery 11/24)

Members in Assisted Living / Skilled Care Homes:

Edith Bulman (SpiriTust Lutheran, York); Shirley Hammond (Morning Glory, Littlestown); Missy Legay (Moul Home, York); Bob Reed (Lorien, Mt Airy, MD); Peggy Reynolds (Quincy-cottage, Waynesboro); Gloria Swingler (Country Meadows-apartment, Mechanicsburg)

Members with Limited Mobility:

Butch Carter, Betty Cook, Joyce Dye, Barbara Evans, Pearl Keckler, Raymond Koenig, Chuck Lutz, Ruth Anna Polley, Wilma Schai-ble, Betty Schulteis, June Spencer, Virginia White

Sock Tree

This year, instead of a Mitten Tree, the Missions Committee is sponsoring a Sock Tree. The greatest need this year is for women's and children's socks, both winter and summer weight. Please place your donations of socks on the tree at the church, and we will ensure that they are delivered to SCCAP. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

HYMN

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Phillips Brooks, Lewis H. Redner

1. O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie;
above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

2. For Christ is born of Mary,
and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together,
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to all on earth!

3. How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is given;
so God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

4. O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in,
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel!

Phillips Brooks was born in Boston in 1835, and died there in 1893. He was educated at Harvard, and served as rector of churches in Philadelphia and Boston. In 1891 he was elected as the Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts. Lewis H. Redner was born in Philadelphia in 1830, and died in Atlantic City in 1908. He was a wealthy real estate broker who was very active in Sunday School and church music, including serving as organist at four churches in Philadelphia.

O Little Town of Bethlehem was written in 1868 in Philadelphia. It was a Christmas gift to the children of the Sunday School of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, and was inspired by the author's trip to the Holy Land in 1866. The music was written in great haste (almost on Christmas Eve) by Redner, who was the church organist. In England this carol is often sung to a different tune (*Forest Green*, used in our hymnal for hymn number 152, *I Sing the Almighty Power of God*) rather than the one we're familiar with in America. The text and music focus on the quiet humility of Christ's birth, and invite us to welcome him into our hearts. It may be found as number 230 in *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

We greatly appreciate your continued faithful donations to GUMC during this time of change and crisis. Your faithfulness has enabled us to continue to pay all of our expenses, and we are very grateful for your continued generosity.

Altar Flowers

The altar flowers for Sunday, December 6 are presented by Vic Reale in loving memory of his wife, Norma Sue Reale.

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