**First Free Methodist Church of Saginaw**

**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**December 19, 2021**



*“His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation." (Luke 1:50)*

Minister: Rev. Jason Evans

First Free Methodist Church

2625 N. Center Rd.

Saginaw, Michigan 48603

Phone: (989) 799-2930

Email: saginawfmc@gmail.com

[www.saginawfirstfmc.org](http://www.saginawfirstfmc.org)

**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

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**Prelude**

**\*\*Greeting/Announcements**

**\*Call to Worship** (*spoken responsively*)

L: Awake O Lord our God, King of the universe

**P: Reveal yourself again in the incarnation**

L: Into a world of devastation and pain

**P: Come hope, lift us from despair**

L: Into every crooked path, unclimbable mountain, uncrossable valley

**P: Come peace, restore every broken soul and broken way**

L: Into every wayward life and misguided heart

**P: Come joy, as we bear fruits of worthy of repentance**

**\*Opening Hymn:** “His Name Is Wonderful” #149 (vv.1-2)

**His Name is Wonderful, His Name is Wonderful**

**His Name is Wonderful, Jesus my Lord**

**He’s the Great Shepherd, The Rock of all Ages**

**Almighty God is He**

**Bow down before Him, Love and adore Him**

**His Name is Wonderful, Jesus my Lord**

**He is the mighty King, Master of everything**

**His Name is Wonderful, Jesus my Lord**

**He’s the Great Shepherd, The Rock of all Ages**

**Almighty God is He**

**Bow down before Him, Love and adore Him**

**His Name is Wonderful, Jesus my Lord**

**Advent Reading 4**

God shows up in the most unexpected places. This should motivate us to look down, to move to the margins, to live out Love-Driven Justice. Love is the way we demonstrate God’s just character, valuing the image of God in all men, women, and children, acting with compassion toward the oppressed, resisting oppression, and stewarding Creation. In following the Free Methodist Way, we pursue Love-Driven Justice with a desire that all may be reconciled to God and one another in ways that reflect God’s character.

In our lectionary texts for this fourth Sunday of Advent, we see God’s dream for love-driven justice outlined. In Micah we read of preference given to the lowly, the small and seemingly insignificant. Bethlehem, the little clan of Judah, would be the one bringing forth the eternal ruler of God’s Kingdom. Hebrews 10 tells us that there are no showmanship awards in the Kingdom of God. Rather, we are invited to take on the nature of the servant just as Christ did. Luke chapter 1 brings us the melodies of Mary’s Song as she declares God’s delight in those who are humble and unassuming. Mary’s lowly status in her community makes her the perfect platform for demonstrating God’s power and majesty. She recognizes her life as just a portion of the narrative of humanity’s long-desired Messiah.

On this fourth Sunday in Advent, we light this candle and link arms with our Free Methodist founders whose deep convictions around matters of injustice motivated them to stand against the evils of slavery, the oppression of the poor, the marginalization of women, and the abuse of power in the church. Our heart for justice expands today, fueled by God’s holy love for the unborn, the vulnerable, oppressed, marginalized, and people of all races and ethnicities.

Come, Lord Jesus, Come.

**\*Invocation and Lord’s Prayer**

L: We ask you, Almighty God, to purify our consciences by thy daily visitation, that when the Son our Lord comes, he may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in unity of the Holy Spirit, on God, now and forever. Instill in us your love, as we pray the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples…

**P: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; your will be done in 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 Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**\*Gloria Patri**

**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.​**

**First Scripture Lesson:** Micah 5:2-5

 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.

 And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

**Prayer of Confession**

L: Sacrifices and offerings God does not desire. God does not take pleasure in burnt offerings nor sin offerings. But the pure in heart will see God. Seek peace, so our spirits may grow calm, our vision be clear, and our purpose be unified…

**P: Almighty and everlasting God, you love everything you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our weaknesses, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.**

**Affirmation of Faith:** Psalm 80

**P: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us! Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure. You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

**Hymn of Affirmation:** “O Little Town of Bethlehem” #169 (vv.1-4)

**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**

**For Christ is born of Mary**

**And, gathered all above**

**While mortals sleep, the angels keep**

**Their watch of wond’ring love**

**O morning stars, together**

**Proclaim the holy birth**

**And praises sing to God the King**

**And peace to all the earth**

**How silently, how silently**

**The wondrous gift is giv’n**

**So God imparts to human hearts**

**The blessings of his heav’n**

**No ear may hear his coming**

**But in this world of sin**

**Where meek souls will receive him, still**

**The dear Christ enters in**

**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 Immanuel**

**Second Scripture Lesson****:** Hebrews 10:5-10

 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God’ (in the scroll of the book it is written of me).”

 When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.”

He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

**Special Music:** Anne Norman

**Children’s Sermon**

**Passing of the Peace**

**Prayers of the People**

L: Lord in Your Mercy…

**P: Hear our prayer.**

**Gospel Lesson****:** Luke 1:39-55

 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.”

**Sermon:** “”

**Prayer of Response**

**Hymn of Response:** “There’s a Song in the Air” #196 (vv.1-4)

**There's a song in the air**

**There's a star in the sky**

**There's a mother's deep prayer**

**And a baby's low cry**

**And the star rains its fire**

**While the beautiful sing**

**For the manger of Bethlehem**

**Cradles a King**

**There's a tumult of joy**

**O’er the wonderful birth,**

**For the virgin's sweet boy**

**Is the Lord of the earth.**

**Ay! the star rains its fire**

**While the beautiful sing,**

**For the manger of Bethlehem**

**Cradles a King**

**In the light of that star**

**Lie the ages impearled;**

**And that song from afar**

**Has swept over the world.**

**Every hearth is aflame,**

**And the beautiful sing**

**In the homes of the nations**

**That Jesus is King**

**We rejoice in the light,**

**And we echo the song**

**That comes down through the night**

**From the heavenly throng.**

**Ay! we shout to the lovely**

**Evangel they bring,**

**And we greet in his cradle**

**Our Savior and King**

**Invitation of Offering**

L:In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. May Love reflect our giving, as we collect this morning’s tithes and offerings.

**\*Doxology**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow**

**Praise Him, all creatures here below**

**Praise Him above, ye heavenly host**

**Praise Father Son, and Holy Ghost.**

**Amen.**

**\*Prayer**

**\*Closing Hymn:** “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” #507 (vv.1-4)

**Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heav'n to earth come down**

**Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown**

**Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art**

**Visit us with thy salvation, enter ev'ry trembling heart**

**Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit, Into every troubled breast**

**Let us all in Thee inherit, Let us find that second rest**

**Take away our bent to sinning, Alpha and Omega be**

**End of faith, as its beginning, Set our hearts at liberty**

**Come, Almighty, to deliver, Let us all Thy life receive**

**Suddenly return and never, Nevermore Thy temples leave**

**Thee we would be always blessing, Serve Thee as Thy hosts above**

**Pray and praise Thee without ceasing, Glory in Thy perfect love**

**Finish, then, thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be**

**Let us see thy great salvation, perfectly restored in thee**

**Changed from glory into glory, 'til in heav'n we take our place**

**Til we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise**

**\*Benediction**

L: May God fill you with all justice, mercy, and humility. May your hearts leap for joy. May your mouths be filled with songs of praise. May you announce glad tidings of peace. And may you welcome Christ into your midst. Go in peace to love and serve. Amen.