

No one can celebrate a genuine Christmas without being truly poor. The self-sufficient, the proud, those who, because they have everything, look down on others, those who have no need even of God – for them there will be no Christmas. Only the poor, the hungry, those who need someone to come on their behalf, will have that someone. That someone is God. Emmanuel. God with us. Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God.

Oscar Romero

Emmanuel, God with us in our nature, in our sorrow, in our lifework, in our punishment, in our grave, and now with us, or rather we with Him, in resurrection, ascension, triumph, and Second Advent splendor.

Charles H. Spurgeon

Christ is coming, and when he gets here it is the graves that will suffer the deepest robbery, the law that will be deprived of its claims, and the evil one who will stand empty-handed.

James Nestigen

The trumpet was used as a signal of Jehovah's coming to rescue his people from hostile oppression. It was the signal for their deliverance. So also this final trumpet-blast, the signal for the dead to arise, for the living to be changed, and for all the elect to be gathered from the four winds to meet the Lord, may well be interpreted as being also the fulfillment of the trumpet-ordinance found in Lev. 25, and, accordingly, as proclaiming liberty throughout the universe for all the children of God, their everlasting jubilee!

William Hendriksen (commenting on 1 Thessalonians 4:16)
New Testament Commentary, Thessalonians

RIVERWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

T U S C A L O O S A , A L A B A M A

November 29, 2020 • 8:30 & 10:30 Services • Rev. Jeff Pate, Pastor

First Sunday of Advent

8:30am

Leader In Worship: Assisting Elder Jimmy Hopper
Joann Williams, piano

10:30am

Leader In Worship: Assisting Elder Allen Powers
Dr. Linda Graham, piano

WELCOME

Program all communication devices to be in silent mode. Thank you.

PRELUDE

Please use this time for prayer and meditation as we prepare to go before the living God in worship.

PRAISE

SCRIPTURE READING & LIGHTING OF THE FIRST ADVENT CANDLE:

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

CALL TO WORSHIP: *from Revelation 7*

Pastor: After this I looked, and behold a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice,

All: **“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”**

Pastor: And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying,

All: **“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”**

Pastor: Come, let us worship!

HYMN: 660 "O God beyond All Praising"

O God beyond all praising,
we worship you today
and sing the love amazing
that songs cannot repay;
for we can only wonder
at every gift you send,
at blessings without number
and mercies without end:
we lift our hearts before you
and wait upon your word,
we honor and adore you,
our great and mighty Lord.

Then hear, O gracious Savior,
accept the love we bring,
that we who know your favor
may serve you as our King;
and whether our tomorrows
be filled with good or ill,
we'll triumph through our sorrows
and rise to bless you still:
to marvel at your beauty
and glory in your ways,
and make a joyful duty
our sacrifice of praise.

PRAYER OF PRAISE AND THE 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.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.*

CONFESSION

SCRIPTURE READING: *Isaiah 64:1-9*

¹Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence—²as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence!
³When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. ⁴From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him. ⁵You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? ⁶We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. ⁷There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities. ⁸But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹Be not so terribly angry, O Lord, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all your people.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God!

CORPORATE CONFESSION OF SIN:

Almighty God, we bow before you in humility and in faith. You are the God of our salvation and we desire to know you and your love more fully. We confess that we have strayed from you and disobeyed you by trusting in our will more than your Word. Remember your mercy. You are good and upright, but we are weak and sinful. Remember your steadfast love. Our hope is in your mercy and your love, so we wait on you. Thank you for coming to us in your Son, Jesus Christ, who died for our salvation. Thank you for making yourself known to us by your Holy Spirit, who has given us faith to believe. Remember us according to your love for the sake of your goodness and glory. Amen.

SILENT REFLECTION AND CONFESSION

CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE & PEACE OF GOD: *from Isaiah 40 & Galatians 4*

Pastor: Lift up your hearts and hear the good news of comfort and peace through the forgiveness of your sins. Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned.

All: **When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.**

Pastor: By God's grace, through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. The peace of Christ be with you all.

All: **And also with you.**

HYMN: 197 "Comfort, Comfort Ye My People"

Comfort, comfort ye my people, speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
comfort those who sit in darkness, mourning 'neath their sorrow's load.

Speak ye to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them;
tell her that her sins I cover, and her warfare now is over.

Yea, her sins our God will pardon, blotting out each dark misdeed;
all that well deserved his anger he no more will see or heed.

She hath suffered many a day, now her griefs have passed away;
God will change her pining sadness into ever-springing gladness.

For the herald's voice is crying in the desert far and near,
bidding all men to repentance, since the kingdom now is here.

O that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God away;
let the valleys rise to meet him, and the hills bow down to greet him.

Make ye straight what long was crooked, make the rougher places plain;
let your hearts be true and humble, as befits his holy reign.

For the glory of the Lord now o'er earth is shed abroad;
and all flesh shall see the token, that his word is never broken.

COMMITMENT

OFFERING

**Tithes and offerings will be collected by deacons following the morning service as congregants leave the sanctuary.*

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Questions and Answers 36-38

Leader: What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification?

All: **The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.**

Leader: What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

All: **The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.**

Leader: What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?

All: **At the resurrection, believers, being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.**

RESPONSE: “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.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

PREACHING OF THE WORD

HYMN: “Blessed Jesus, at Your Word”

Blessed Jesus, at your word we are gathered all to hear you;
let our hearts and souls be stirred now to seek and love and fear you,
by your teachings, sweet and holy, drawn from earth to love you solely.

All our knowledge, sense, and sight lie in deepest darkness shrouded,
till your Spirit breaks our night with the beams of truth unclouded.
You alone to God can win us; you must work all good within us.

Glorious Lord, yourself impart, Light of light from God proceeding;
open now our ears and heart, help us by your Spirit’s pleading;
hear the cry your people raises, hear and bless our prayers and praises.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, praise to you and adoration!
Grant that we your Word may trust and obtain true consolation,
while we here below must wander, till we sing your praises yonder.

SCRIPTURE: *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

¹³But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Pastor: The grass withers, the flower fades,
All: but the word of our God will stand forever.

SERMON: “In Anticipation of His Advent: Be Encouraged”

Rev. Jeff Pate

I. For the believer, knowledge provides hope.

The Thessalonians' apparent concern:

Other "hopeless" ideas:

What we believe...

Past realities

Future implications

- II. In his second advent, Jesus will come with full authority and joined by a full company.

A victorious descent

A glorious reunion

Eternal fellowship

Writing His Word on our hearts: 1 Thessalonians 5:8-10

“⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.”

HYMN: 480 “Come, for the Feast Is Spread”

Come, for the feast is spread,
 hark to the call;
 come to the Living Bread,
 offered to all.
 Come to his house of wine,
 low on his breast recline,
 all that he has is thine;
 come, sinner, come.

Come to the throne of grace,
 boldly draw near;
 he who would win the race
 must tarry here.
 Whate'er thy want may be,
 here is the grace for thee,
 Jesus thine only plea;
 come, Christian, come.

RESPONSIVE READING:

Pastor: The bread that we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

All: We who are many are one body, for we all share the same loaf.

Pastor: The cup for which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

All: The cup that we drink is our participation in the blood of Christ.

Pastor: Congregation of Jesus Christ, the Lord has prepared his table for all who love him and trust in him alone for their salvation. All who are truly sorry for their sins, who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and who desire to live in obedience to him are now invited to come with gladness to the table of the Lord. The gifts of God for the people of God.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Riverwood Presbyterian uses wine in the celebration of Holy Communion. If you would prefer non-alcoholic grape juice, please take a cup from the inner circle of the tray.

BENEDICTION

HYMN: 324 “Christ Is Coming!”

Christ is coming! Let creation from her groans and travail cease;
let the glorious proclamation hope restore and faith increase:
Christ is coming! Christ is coming! Come, thou blessed Prince of Peace.

Earth can now but tell the story of thy bitter cross and pain;
she shall yet behold thy glory, when thou comest back to reign:
Christ is coming! Christ is coming! Let each heart repeat the strain.

Long thine exiles have been pining, far from rest, and home, and thee:
but, in heav'nly vestures shining, they their loving Lord shall see:
Christ is coming! Christ is coming! Haste the joyous jubilee.

With that blessed hope before us, let no harp remain unstrung;
let the mighty advent chorus onward roll from tongue to tongue:
“Christ is coming! Christ is coming! Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!”

BENEDICTION

DISMISSING HYMN: 263 “Lift High the Cross”

Refrain:

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim,
till all the world adore his sacred name.

Thy kingdom come, that earth's despair may cease
beneath the shadow of its healing peace.

(Refrain)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

DEACON'S FUND OFFERING

Every month that has a fifth Sunday, our Deacons have an offering to replenish funds in an account used exclusively for mercy ministry needs. This fund has enabled our Diaconate to extend the kingdom of God to many within our community. This morning, all cash and designated gifts will be used for this purpose.

COVENANT KIDS CLUB AND YOUTH GROUP

Covenant Kids Club and Youth Group will meet tonight. Covenant Kids Club meets from 5:30-6:30pm behind the Fellowship Hall, and Youth Group meets from 5:30-7:00pm behind the Administration Building.

ANGEL TREE

Angel Tree tags are available now in the narthex. What is Angel Tree? It is a ministry to children of incarcerated parents. Through this program, we as a church can embrace children in our community by providing them with a Christmas gift, given in love, on behalf of their parent. Each gift presents an opportunity to share the love and hope of Christ. Please prayerfully consider participating in this program by doing any of the following:

1. Purchasing presents (one clothing and one toy item) for a child from the tree.
2. Making a donation designated "Angel Tree Gift" and we will have a shopper purchase the gifts for you.
3. Providing non-perishable food items for food baskets for each family.
4. Help deliver the packages to the families on Dec. 21 or 22.

For more information, contact Joann Williams (jwilliams@riverwoodchurch.org).

CHRISTMAS CRAFT AND FUN DAY

Christmas Craft and Fun Day will be Saturday, December 12 from 1:00-3:00pm. This day is for children from 4 - 12 years old. We will have crafts, games, the Christmas story, music, and snacks. To assist in planning this year, please let Joann know that your child will be attending. Please prayerfully consider participating in this program by:

1. Providing snacks and drink boxes.
2. Assisting Joann in pre-packaging craft bags to be used that day.
3. Helping on December 12.