

## WORSHIP for November 29, 2020

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1) To watch **sermons recorded** on Zoom on our YouTube Channel, go to the FPCP website: <https://www.fpcpataskala.com/> and click on WORSHIP or follow us on Facebook from the homepage. To potentially increase subscribers & views,  like and  share!
- 2) Please invite family or friends, who want to join us for live worship on Sundays @10:45am, to request access by emailing their name, email, & phone number to [fpcofpataskala@gmail.com](mailto:fpcofpataskala@gmail.com)
- Zoom live worship** attendance: 10/4 50, 10/11 58, 10/18 46, and 10/25 58.
- 3) If you need a COVID-19 **cloth mask** call 740-901-1232 for the Johnsons, who lead the CRT. Thank you to Gage Marcum and Katie Slaymaker, who have been making masks available.
- 4) **Give to FPCP** while shopping for Christmas or for any time at smile.amazon.com. .5% of purchases go to FPCP, when you register for FPCP by going to this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/31-1143651>  
**When shop thru smile.amazon.com**, donations work like Kroger points. But for the church to get credit, you have to enter thru the link the first time, before shopping under your amazon account.
- 5) "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." *John 1:5*  
**Please bring a candle** to light during zoom worship during Advent thru Christmas **11/29-12/24**. The candle may be real or battery operated.
- 6) One "Zoom" Schoolhouse **for all ages 10-10:30am Sundays** as we "**Walk with Jesus Thru Israel**" with photos from Pastor Janet's 2008 trip to the Holy Land and corresponding study of Scripture **starts 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent 11/29**.
- 7) **Register online for Saturday 12/5 2-5pm Main Street Christmas Cookie Walk**

### SERVICE 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**Lighting Candle of Hope**, including how Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in the New Testament with the birth of Jesus  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I\\_sx7Gk8hQo#action=share](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_sx7Gk8hQo#action=share)

***Light a candle and meditate on the Advent Candle of Hope***

**Call to Worship:** Psalm 27:1, 13-14 *Responsively*

The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?

**The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?**

I will remain confident of this;

**I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.**

**Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.**

Opening Hymn: "**Blessed Assurance**"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDeiy9-t2GE>

**Prayer of Confession:** Psalm 27:1-3 *Unison*

Though you, Jesus, are our salvation and stronghold, you are our light and living hope, we confess that we often live in fear, as people without hope. Forgive these our sins, and fill us anew with hope and faith, O Lord, through your Holy Spirit. Amen.

*(Pause now for a time of silent confession.)*

**Assurance of Forgiveness:** Psalm 27:13 *Responsively*

*"I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."  
We believe the good news of the gospel.*

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!**

**"The Gloria Patri"**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgcYD\\_m4OhU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgcYD_m4OhU)

**Hymn of Preparation: "Open My Eyes That I May See"**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDceaG7kFQA>

**Call to God's Word:** *Unison*

**"Scripture cannot be set aside... What does Scripture say?"** John 10:35 & Romans 4:3.

**Prayer for Illumination:** *Unison*

Lord, through your Spirit enable us to consider your Word, and to enact it in our lives to bring you glory and praise. Amen.

**Scripture Readings: Acts 16:6-16 & Philippians 3**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+16%3A6-16&version=NIV>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+3&version=NIV>

**SERMON: "Heavenward Hope"** by *The Reverend Dr. Janet Hufford*

Watch sermon on: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAdy2hvW6PL93B6hbgswTxf93Evs575yd>

Advent is the time we consciously wait in hope for Jesus to come again. In the meantime, Advent has as its themes: hope, peace, joy, and love, words which we long to hear in a year such as 2020. Yet Paul's letter to Philippi with all these hopeful themes was written while he was confined to prison in Rome. The 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent focuses on hope.

Think about our human need for hope. We all have hopes. Things we hope to do. Wish lists. Bucket lists. To do lists. People to see. Places to go. Hope is a need. Without hope, we feel hopeless. Along with hopelessness is helplessness. Neither of these are good for our total well-being. We need hope.

Paul puts his hope in Jesus Christ and is dedicated in his final years to taking the Good News of Christ to the ends of the earth. Our dedication is to be the same. For in Acts 1:8 before his ascension Jesus promises his disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,

and to the ends of the earth.”

Before we read from Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we come to better understand this letter through the Book of Acts, where we hear how Paul came to Philippi and what happened there. We already heard in Acts 1:8 of the Holy Spirit’s coming in power. The Holy Spirit comes upon the first followers of Jesus on the Jewish holy day of Pentecost, accounted for in Acts 2. In Acts 9, Paul, then called Saul, an enemy of the followers of Jesus, is converted to Christ and the Holy Spirit comes in power upon him, too. Then in Acts 11, Paul and Barnabas begin ministry in Antioch. Antioch is located in what we know as Turkey, where Paul and Barnabas go on their 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey, recorded in Acts 13 & 14.

A second missionary journey by Paul and Silas is recorded in Acts 16, which takes us to Philippi. The mission trip begins in Turkey, where Timothy, a young disciple, from Lystra who is both Greek and Jewish joins them. After the three take the Good News of Christ to portions of Turkey, Paul hopes and plans to go into northern Asia. Yet, in Acts 16:6-7.

Now Paul has to let go of the hope of his human plan. Apparently, the Father’s will is different than Paul’s. So, the Spirit of Jesus, who is the Holy Spirit, does not allow Paul to carry out his human plan and hope. After all, we’re not perfect. We don’t see perfectly. We can be wrong. So, God in his perfect kindness and mercy saves us from ourselves.

When our hopes are outside God’s will and thankfully don’t come to pass, like Paul, we need to seek God’s best plan. To see, listen to this reading from Acts 16:8-16. How fitting that Lydia is a dealer in purple cloth, with purple the color for the season of Advent.

Now note how the plan, which the Spirit of Jesus gives to Paul, is far beyond Paul’s. God’s will is for Paul to witness beyond Asia, beyond the eastern side of the world, traveling into Greece, in Europe and the start of western world. Paul’s trip to Philippi is the start of a westward movement that brings the Christian faith to many of our ancestors and to us!

Now our hope, too, is to be the hope of Christ & the Father’s will. God’s plans are not always our plans. Proverbs 19:21 says, “many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”

But sometimes God’s plans are our plans. Years ago, after having carefully studied the Acts of the Apostles, a hope began to stir in me, *Pastor Janet*, to go to the places that Paul went, especially to Philippi from his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, where the Christian faith began to spread into the west. But most arranged pilgrimages did not include Philippi, since it is not as popular a destination as Athens, for example. Further, Philippi not an easy place to reach, even today. The city is small, so there is no major airport. In addition, the area is surrounded by immense mountains, that are difficult to navigate. By way of long and winding roads on a bus, in the fall of 2012 Philippi was reached and also numerous other places on Paul’s 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey. Visiting places in Scripture enable a better understanding of the early church, Scripture, and preaching. As such, I had hoped to go to others places from Paul’s life, including Malta and Rome in May of 2020.

But COVID-19 reached Italy with a vengeance before I could go, and soon thereafter spread to the US, leaving all of us confined within our homes. Even as businesses and travel open up, those at high risk are still cautioned to stay as isolated as possible. So except for semi-monthly trips to the grocery store and open air visits this fall, I am voluntarily confined,

like Paul under house arrest. Remember, Paul had actually been freed in Jerusalem after going before the governor, but in his insisting on coming to the emperor of Rome he voluntarily came under house arrest for the sake of the Gospel. A current elder on session reminds me that my situation is similar.

So, while at home I prepared sermons from Paul's prison letters. We begin with his letter to the church of Philippi, his first stop in the western world. We start in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Philippians, which may best relay today's Advent theme of hope. Hear Philippians 3:1-6. At this start of Philippians 3, Paul recaps his credentials to write as a Jew and Pharisee. But in vv. 7-11 Paul sets aside his background of knowledge in exchange for his knowledge of Christ from his personal relationship with Jesus. Hear Philippians 3:7-11. Paul admits that righteousness comes through faith in Christ alone. He acknowledges hope even in the participation with Christ in suffering that comes with resurrection from the dead.

I began to write this sermon almost 5 months ago on July 4. Macy's continuously played a commercial during the approach of Independence Day directing us to look upwards for hope... to fireworks displays. A few weeks before the 4<sup>th</sup>, displays popped up in our neighborhoods, but they're only temporary. If we run to the window at their sound, the works vanish before we can see them. Now the hope displayed in ads are for a bounty of Christmas gifts wrapped in brightly colored paper and ribbons. On Christmas Eve children and families may look up hoping to see Santa approaching on his sleigh. But even when colorful gifts come, the wrappings are quickly shed and discarded. Even the contents are soon blended into to everyday life.

Advent, too, reminds us to look up. Advent is the time where we are reminded to look up for Christ to come a second time onto the earth. He already was born as God incarnate in this world. On earth he suffered and died. He was raised from the grave, but he also rose into heaven. And the same angels who announced his birth and resurrection, announced on the day of his ascension that he would come again on the clouds in the same way that he rose to heaven. At his 2<sup>nd</sup> coming, the hope of the fullness of our resurrection, our resurrected bodies, will come to pass.

From Philippians 3:12 on to the end of the chapter, Paul, too, directs us to look up for hope. Hear Philippians 3:12-21. Paul reminds himself even while under house arrest, to "press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called [him] heavenward in Christ Jesus" (v.14). Then he adds, "All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things" (v. 15), "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so they will be like his glorious body" (v. 20).

Our hope is not in fireworks nor human gift nor in vaccine nor in government nor in any human work nor in our church building nor in anything of this earth. These are only temporary. During these troubled times, we could encourage each other saying, "Don't lose hope." But true hope can't be lost. True hope is everlasting. True hope is eternal. True hope, our hope and the world's hope, is in Christ and Christ alone.

So last words in the Bible acclaim, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.'" Thus, we respond in sure hope, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the

Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen."

**Hymn of Response: "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus"**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dmO8UPIWoo>

**PRAYERS of Joy and Concern**, followed by:

**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.**

**Please Continue to Give in Dedication to Our Lord and Savior, Jesus**

**Prayer Of Dedication: *Unison***

In view of your mercy help us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to you, O God. Amen. *Romans 12:1*

**Doxology**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqpXWF15avU>

**Closing Hymn: "My Hope Is Built"**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWdNgXSd46Y>

**Benediction: *Responsively***

Go forth with hope into the world to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**