*“Landmark of the Gospel Since 1834”*

**St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church**

*Our Purpose: Led by the Word of God, St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church is a family who lives and shares the gospel of Jesus Christ through love and service to all.*

**December 6, 2023 *6:30 PM* Midweek 1**

**Preparing in Christ’s Presence**

*Midweek prayer services are essential preparations for the coming of the Christ child. Time out must be taken in order to be fully present for what Christ is ready to offer you.*

*Tonight we consider the practice of DOING LESS.*

*As the assembly gathers, the first candle on the Advent wreath is lit. Those worshipping from home, light one candle.*

PREPARATION

Gather one stone per worshipper. Have a marker ready.

Ponder: What can I let go of or erase from my to-do list in order to be more present with Christ this Advent?

INVOCATION

In the name of the ☩ triune God in whose presence we wait,

the Holy Parent, fulfilling the promise,

the Holy Child, waiting to be born,

the Holy Spirit, illumining the way.

**Amen.**

*Silence is given as a gift.*

*The leader rings a bell and reads the opening sentence.*

*The assembly responds with the lines in bold.*

OPENING DIALOG

In the hustle and bustle, in the kitchens and malls,

**it is hard to feel still.**

Our to-do lists are long;

**it is hard to be present.**

We are called to stillness;

**we long to be still.**

What can we let go of, that we might rest?

**What can we not do, that we might be present**

**with Christ?**

SONG *Come and Fill our Hearts*

**Come and fill our hearts with your peace.**

**You alone, O Lord, are holy.**

**Come and fill our hearts with your peace.**

**Allelu---ia!**

PSALM 46

1God is our refuge and strength,

a very present help in trouble.

**2Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,**

**and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;**

3though its waters rage and foam,

and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

**4There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,**

**the holy habitation of the Most High.**

5God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken;

God shall help it at the break of day.

**6The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake;**

**God speaks, and the earth melts away.**

7The Lord of hosts is with us;

the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

**8Come now, regard the works of the Lord,**

**what desolations God has brought upon the earth;**

9behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world;

who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.

**10“Be still, then, and know that I am God;**

**I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.”**

11The Lord of hosts is with us;

the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

*Silence*

PSALM PRAYER

Lord God, our refuge and strength, when raging waters rise up against your holy city, watch over it and keep it safe. Make us still in your presence, and bring an end to war and violence, that all people may dwell in safety along the river that flows in the city of God; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

*Today (A Poem by Mary Oliver)*

Today I'm flying low and I'm  
not saying a word.  
I'm letting all the voodoos of ambition sleep.

The world goes on as it must,  
the bees in the gardening rumbling a little,  
the fish leaping, the gnats getting eaten.  
And so forth.

But I'm taking the day off.  
Quiet as a feather.  
I hardly move though really I'm traveling  
a terrific distance.

Stillness. One of the doors  
into the temple.

By Mary Oliver

GOSPEL

**Jesus Visits Martha and Mary**

**38**Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him. **39**She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus’s feet and listened to what he was saying. **40**But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me.” **41**But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, **42**but few things are needed—indeed only one.[[c](about:blank#fen-NRSVUE-25398c)] Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”



SONG *If We Live*

**If we live, we live to the Lord.**

**If we die, we die to the Lord.**

**So then, whether we live**

**or whether we die,**

**We are the Lord’s.**

PRAYERS

Ever-present God, in this time when busy-ness is exalted and it seems there is so much to do, keep our focus on you. May we let go of those things that add stress or distract us so that we may sit in your splendor, even for a moment, and be present to that which gives us life. In the name of your Son, Jesus, for whom we wait expectantly.

**Amen.**

That we are able to let go of things we do not need to carry and be present as we wait for Christ’s return,

**we pray to you, O God.**

That we are freed to both give and receive during this Advent season,

**we pray to you, O God.**

That we see holiness in the small things,

**we pray to you, O God.**

That through the stresses of this season we may live in and live out your love and grace,

**we pray to you, O God.**

*Here other prayers may be offered.*

We lift up our prayers to you, O Lord, finishing with the prayer your Son taught us to pray…

LORD’S PRAYER

**Our Father….**

BLESSING

God, whose presence grants you stillness,

Christ, whose peace helps you wait,

Holy Spirit, whose fire illumines your way,

☩ bless and keep you always.

**Amen.**

SONG *Oh, Come, Oh, Come Emmanuel* ***LBW #34, vs.1&4***

**1 Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear.**

**Refrain:  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to you, O Israel.**

**4 Oh, come, blest Dayspring come and cheer**

**Our spirits by your advent here;**

**Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,**

**And death’s dark shadows put to flight. [Refrain]**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Be present with Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Share Christ’s peace as you go on your way.*

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