

**Pastors Advent Challenge
to the people of the United Proclamation of the Gospel Parish and
St. John's Windish Lutheran Church!**

December 7 – December 13

Share the gift of "INVITATION"

1. For my facebook friends, or for people who utilize social media. Let's fill social media this week with messages of invitation. Letting people know that they are invited, welcomed, accepted and loved by God... Right now! For the people who they are in this moment, not for who they will become in the future. You may also think about inviting your friends and family to join us for online worship celebrations that we are offering; our prayers and Scripture journals, our "Just for You!" reflections, our "Daily Pause" offering, our mid-week Advent video, or our weekly worship celebration just to name a few!
2. If you don't use social media, let's invite people to talk to you about how they are worshipping during this season of Advent. Call them and perhaps read one of your favorite Bible passages with them. Tell these people what strengthens your relationship with God and with others in the world around you!

Some suggested readings on "Invitation."

Monday December 7, 2020

Genesis 31:43-55

Jacob's Treaty with Laban

⁴³ Then Laban replied to Jacob, "These women are my daughters, these children are my grandchildren, and these flocks are my flocks—in fact, everything you see is mine. But what can I do now about my daughters and their children? ⁴⁴ So come, let's make a covenant, you and I, and it will be a witness to our commitment."

⁴⁵ So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a monument. ⁴⁶ Then he told his family members, "Gather some stones." So they gathered stones and piled them in a heap. Then Jacob and Laban sat down beside the pile of stones to eat a covenant meal. ⁴⁷ To commemorate the event, Laban called the place Jegar-sahadutha (which means "witness pile" in Aramaic), and Jacob called it Galeed (which means "witness pile" in Hebrew).

⁴⁸ Then Laban declared, "This pile of stones will stand as a witness to remind us of the covenant we have made today." This explains why it was called Galeed—"Witness Pile." ⁴⁹ But it was also called Mizpah (which means "watchtower"), for Laban said, "May the LORD keep watch between us to make sure that we keep this covenant when we are out of each other's sight. ⁵⁰ If you mistreat my daughters or if you marry other wives, God will see it even if no one else does. He is a witness to this covenant between us.

⁵¹ “See this pile of stones,” Laban continued, “and see this monument I have set between us. ⁵² They stand between us as witnesses of our vows. I will never pass this pile of stones to harm you, and you must never pass these stones or this monument to harm me. ⁵³ I call on the God of our ancestors—the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of my grandfather Nahor—to serve as a judge between us.”

So Jacob took an oath before the fearsome God of his father, Isaac, to respect the boundary line. ⁵⁴ Then Jacob offered a sacrifice to God there on the mountain and invited everyone to a covenant feast. After they had eaten, they spent the night on the mountain.

⁵⁵ Laban got up early the next morning, and he kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, You call us into relationship with You and with the world around us. Allow this time of patiently but expectantly waiting for Your return to be a time in which we invite others into relationship with You. Grant us wisdom, and guide our hearts to share Your good news with more and more people in the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Savior. Amen.

Tuesday December 8, 2020

Isaiah 55

Invitation to the LORD's Salvation

55 “Is anyone thirsty?

Come and drink—

even if you have no money!

Come, take your choice of wine or milk—

it's all free!

² Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength?

Why pay for food that does you no good?

Listen to me, and you will eat what is good.

You will enjoy the finest food.

³ “Come to me with your ears wide open.

Listen, and you will find life.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you.

I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David.

⁴ See how I used him to display my power among the peoples.

I made him a leader among the nations.

⁵ You also will command nations you do not know,

and peoples unknown to you will come running to obey,

because I, the LORD your God,

the Holy One of Israel, have made you glorious.”

⁶ Seek the LORD while you can find him.

Call on him now while he is near.

⁷ Let the wicked change their ways

and banish the very thought of doing wrong.

Let them turn to the LORD that he may have mercy on them.
Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.

⁸“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD.
“And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.

⁹For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so my ways are higher than your ways
and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

¹⁰“The rain and snow come down from the heavens
and stay on the ground to water the earth.

They cause the grain to grow,
producing seed for the farmer
and bread for the hungry.

¹¹It is the same with my word.
I send it out, and it always produces fruit.

It will accomplish all I want it to,
and it will prosper everywhere I send it.

¹²You will live in joy and peace.
The mountains and hills will burst into song,
and the trees of the field will clap their hands!

¹³Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow.
Where nettles grew, myrtles will sprout up.

These events will bring great honor to the LORD’s name;
they will be an everlasting sign of his power and love.”

Prayer: Almighty Lord, You provide food for the hungry and water for the thirsty. Allow us to be Your vessels in this world, that we might join with You bringing wholeness to the people of this world, for we know that You are indeed merciful and call all people into Your divine presence. Grant us the words to speak and the actions to take in order to fulfill Your holy purpose for this world. In Jesus’ name we pray these things. Amen.

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

1 Corinthians 1:4-9

Paul Gives Thanks to God

⁴I always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. ⁵Through him, God has enriched your church in every way—with all of your eloquent words and all of your knowledge. ⁶This confirms that what I told you about Christ is true. ⁷Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. ⁹God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer: Loving God, You have shared with us bountiful and special gifts to enrich our community. As we expectantly await Your return grant us the serenity that is necessary in order that we might bring our gifts to bear sharing a message of peace that can only come from You. Keep us steadfast to share in Your ministry with the world until that day when You return to

make all things new. We ask these things in the name of Jesus, the baby born in Bethlehem. Amen.

Thursday, December 10, 2020

Acts 2:42-47

The Believers Form a Community

⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— ⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, You have knit us into a community which shares Your Good News and joins us together. Grant a sense of peace and unity among our community of faith, that we might see one another as fellow pilgrims on Your Holy Highway. Allow us to be generous with one another and with the world around us, offering forgiveness along our daily path just as we have been forgiven, that all the world might see what being in relationship with You and with our community might bring to their lives. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Friday, December 11, 2020

Matthew 25:31-40

³¹ "But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'

³⁷ "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

⁴⁰ “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’

Prayer: Creator God, You call us to live a life of faithful actions and to share Your presence in the world with those who are in need. Many times Lord our eyes do not behold those around us who have needs, open our eyes Lord. Many times Lord, our lives seem to busy to slow up and offer assistance, slow us up Lord to help. In all we say, in all we do, allow us to be bearers of Your light in the world in which we live. We ask these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Saturday, December 12, 2020

Isaiah 61:1-3, 10-11

Good News for the Oppressed

61 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me,
for the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted
and to proclaim that captives will be released
and prisoners will be freed.

² He has sent me to tell those who mourn
that the time of the LORD’s favor has come,
and with it, the day of God’s anger against their enemies.

³ To all who mourn in Israel,
he will give a crown of beauty for ashes,
a joyous blessing instead of mourning,
festive praise instead of despair.
In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks
that the LORD has planted for his own glory.

¹⁰ I am overwhelmed with joy in the LORD my God!
For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation
and draped me in a robe of righteousness.

I am like a bridegroom dressed for his wedding
or a bride with her jewels.

¹¹ The Sovereign LORD will show his justice to the nations of the world.
Everyone will praise him!

His righteousness will be like a garden in early spring,
with plants springing up everywhere.

Prayer: Good and gracious Lord, in the world around us many people see and feel what they believe to be Your holy anger or wrath. Grant us the wisdom to meet their harsh judgments of You to be met with a word of peace and forgiveness. For You Lord, have called us all to share good news, to comfort, to proclaim the freedom that an only come from You, and to declare to this weary world that indeed You will return to make all things new! In Jesus’ name we pray these things. Amen.

Sunday, December 13, 2020

Romans 16:25-27

²⁵ Now all glory to God, who is able to make you strong, just as my Good News says. This message about Jesus Christ has revealed his plan for you Gentiles, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. ²⁶ But now as the prophets foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they too might believe and obey him. ²⁷ All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.

Prayer: Eternal God, allow our lives to be lived in a joyful expression of Your divine love. Amen.