THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: JOY (Congregation Reads **BOLD**)

No matter what troubles overwhelm us today, Isaiah reminds us that in all of our preparation and passionate pursuit of God’s coming kingdom, we must not forget that God’s salvation has come and is coming. “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:3). With joy you will remember that God’s salvation is already present among us.

**Faced with the troubles and the suffering of the world, we choose to live in joyful presence to God and one another. We will not turn away from the pain and the hurt in our world, and we will not stop rejoicing in God, whose salvation fills us to overflowing that God’s love might flow through us and flood our troubled world with hope, peace, and joy.**

We light this candle of joy as a sign of our commitment to be present to ourselves, our friends, our families, and our neighbors that in sharing our vulnerable lives we might share in the glorious joy of God’s salvation together.

***Light the Pink candle***

Please announce Hymn #224 Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

OPENING PRAYER

Eternal Creator, with you each moment of life is full of wonder and surprise. We pray you to make us watchful as we await the coming of Christ. Grant that we may not be found sleeping in sin but awake and rejoicing in your newness of life. Through the same Jesus Christ our Savior, Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Children of God, our world is full of the fruit of humanity’s greed, apathy, and neglect for the love of God, neighbor, self, and all creation.

**What, then, should we do?**

Our world is also full of the fruit of God’s love that wells up all around us, sustaining us, saving us, reviving us to live as the people of God.

**What, then, should we do?**

God encircles us on every side, Love divine present with us in creation, in community, and in the anticipated arrival of the infant Emmanuel. What then, children of God, should you do?

**We will live in joyful presence with God and neighbor, turning away from sin and toward a life with God and one another marked by joy, justice, and mercy. Amen.**

Please announce HYMN #196 “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 3:7–18

Then John said to the crowds who came to be baptized by him, “You children of snakes! Who warned you to escape from the angry judgment that is coming soon? Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives. And don’t even think about saying to yourselves, Abraham is our father. I tell you that God is able to raise up Abraham’s children from these stones. The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit will be chopped down and tossed into the fire.”

The crowds asked him, “What then should we do?”

He answered, “Whoever has two shirts must share with the one who has none, and whoever has food must do the same.”

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. They said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?”

He replied, “Collect no more than you are authorized to collect.”

Soldiers asked, “What about us? What should we do?”

He answered, “Don’t cheat or harass anyone, and be satisfied with your pay.”

The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ. John replied to them all, “I baptize you with water, but the one who is more powerful than me is coming. I’m not worthy to loosen the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. The shovel he uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in his hands. He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into his barn. But he will burn the husks with a fire that can’t be put out.” With many other words John appealed to them, proclaiming good news to the people.

The word of God for the people of God.

**Thanks be to God.**