

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Preparing in Christ's Presence:

An Advent Midweek Series

Week 3 – Hold Onto Hope

Wednesday, December 17, 2025



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Participating in Today’s Service:

Pastor:	Pastor Lynn M. Fonfara
Music Director:	Len Cremisio

Focus Question: How can we hold on to hope in the midst of the world's troubles?

Gather in silence

Gathering Hymn: ELW 561 "Joyous Light"

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.**

Opening Dialogue

Waiting to be born, the Holy Spirit, illumining the way.
Amen.

Opening Dialogue

In a world of shadows, **seek illumination.**
As we wait in night, **we look for sunrise.**
Surrounded by fear, **we hold fast to God's promise.**
We wait with hope for Christ's return, **for the dawn of peace and justice.**

Song: ELW 254 "Come thou long-expected Jesus"

Readings

Isaiah 58:9-14

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am." If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

10 if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

11 The Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your needs in parched places and make your bones strong, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters never fail.

12 Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

13 If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor

it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests or pursuing your own affairs;

14 then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Revelation 21:1-6

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and be their God; 4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for[e] the first things have passed away."

5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

“Still I Rise,” a poem by Maya Angelou

Still I Rise

MAYA ANGELOU

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Reflection/Open Space

Meditative music accompanies this time.

Group Discussion

Invite worshipers during the week to share images that inspire hope, and a few words about why or how it gives them hope. View the images on the screens, and discuss together or in small groups why the image inspires wonder.

Activity

Plant a seed and watch it grow through the rest of Advent and into the Christmas season.

Silent Reflection

Use this time for silent reflection.

The ringing of a bell gathers the assembly back together for song and prayer.

Song: ELW 232 “Let my prayer rise before you”

Prayer

God of light and darkness, in this season of short days and long nights, help us remember that you are always with us. Give us strength to work for your reign, living in hope as we wait for Christ to come again. In the name of your Son, Jesus, for whom we wait expectantly. **Amen.**

That we keep our eyes on you through tumult and strife, **we pray to you, O God.**

That we remember your promises, **we pray to you, O God.**

That we work while we hold on to grace, **we pray to you, O God.**

That we hold fast to the hope of Christ’s return, **we pray to you, O God.**

We lift up our prayers to you, God of Hope. **Amen.**

Blessing

God, whose covenant calls you to act,
Christ, whose love leads you by grace,
Holy Spirit, whose wisdom points you toward hope,
✠ bless and keep you always. **Amen.**

Song: ELW 266 All Earth Is Hopeful

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Be present with Christ.

Thanks be to God.

A greeting of peace may be shared by all.

***The end of Worship –
The beginning of Christian Ministry.***

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