**Refusing to be comforted**


## Stay at Home Orders

God gave Noah stay on the Ark Orders.

God told Moses to order His people to stay at home on the night of Passover.

God gave Elijah orders to stay in the Widow’s home.

God gave Joseph stay in Egypt orders.

## In Person Worship

We will have two services on Sunday, December 20th, at 10 am and 11 am. The 10 am service will be on Facebook Live. They will both offer Music and reading of the Christmas Story from Luke.

Like Moses, I encourage you to Stay at Home and join us on Facebook. Your life is more precious to me than an attendance record.

Worship at home

Having Eyes to See | Having Ears to Hear | Prompts Action

Chapter 4

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20**

## Lighting the Advent Candle

**ADVENT CANDLE: LOVE**

 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”


## Christmas Eve

This is a drop - in -experience from 5pm-7pm!

* Enter through the Fellowship Hall.
* Expect to be seated in the Fellowship Hall and receive a self-guided meditation that will prepare your heart, soul, and mind to receive Holy Communion.
* Your family/group will be led by an usher into the sanctuary.
* Expect to enter the Sanctuary to receive and kiss the hand of God. You will be seated at a table. You will receive a blessing, Holy Communion, and a Candle to Light. You will leave your lit candle in a container of sand as a sign of being the Light of the Christ’s Love for the World. After a time of prayer, you will be led through the Fellowship Hall to “Go in Christ Peace.”
* The Tables will be sanitized between seatings. This is a service of Patience and Kindness that teaches us not to insist on our ways, traditions, or agenda’s!

Advent means we watch and wait for Christ’s coming. Christ comes to give Love to “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness”. Disciples of Christ receive Love and give Love to God, self, and neighbor.

Joseph hungers and thirst for righteousness. He received Christ’s Hope, Peace, and Joy. Hope fills hearts and minds with peace. He received Mary! Peace gives and receives kindness in disturbing circumstances. Joy celebrates the Hope and Peace of Christ’s presence in all of life’s disturbances. Hopeless people insist on their way. Like Herod, they refuse to be comforted by anything other than power, control, and sacrifice of neighbors.

This week speak with loved ones about your hunger and thirst for righteousness. Look for Christ coming into your ways to give you Hope, Peace, and Joy. Let these ways fill your heart and mind. Notice what happens in your soul. The soul filled with Hope, Joy, and Peace receives God’s Unconditional Love. Let Love overflow to your neighbor!

## Hearing and Receiving God’s Word

**ACT FOUR: “Refusing to be comforted.”**

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. **17**Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

**18**

“A voice is heard in Ramah,
    weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
    and refusing to be comforted,
    because they are no more.”

**19**After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt **20**and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.”

**21**So he got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. **22**But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, **23**and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

## Pastor’s Prayer

Father, through Christ, you reveal your desire to bless “the poor in spirit”. Your will being done on earth as it is in heaven comforts those who mourn. Receiving the earth as an inheritance fills our hearts and minds with a hunger and thirst for You, alone. Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for mercy that flows like a cleansing, healing river. Holy Spirit teach us that fear is for giving to God. Holy Spirit teach us that faith is for receiving Christ’s Hope, Peace, and Joy! Amen.

## The Message

Matthew begins his Good News story with genealogy. God’s purpose for sending Joseph, Mary, and infant Jesus to live Egypt is wrapped up in Rachel “refusing to be comforted”.

Before Abram and Sari received Isaac, their son, God said his “Great Nation” would live 400 years in exile. (Genesis 15:12-16) Isaac had two sons, twins, Esau and Jacob. Jacob is tricked into marrying sisters, Leah and Rachel. Leah gives Jacob 10 sons. Rachel is barren. The shame and guilt of being childless leaves her “poor in spirit” and mourning without Hope of comfort. She receives comfort and joy in giving birth to Benjamin and Joseph. She dies giving birth to Joseph. Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery. He was carried into Egypt where he rose to be the second most powerful person in all of Egypt. Joseph was Pharaoh’s righthand.

God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. Jesus was born of Mary to save people from sin. Jesus is God with us like the Good Shepherd who lays down his life to deliver his sheep from evil. On the cross of shame and guilt The Good Shepherd suffers all peoples’ sin. In Jesus’ resurrection we experience the healing power of receiving Christ’s Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Modern day Magi tell us that the Christmas Star will once again shine its light on the longest night of the year. It has not been seen since the 13th century.[[1]](#footnote-2) The World sits in the darkness of a pandemic the ancient Egyptians called plagues. The people of the most powerful nation on earth sit in fear of who shall emerge as President, Herod. As Christmas gifts are wrapped and placed beneath LED lit, artificial, evergreen trees people “refuse to be comforted.”

Some are like Herod. They refuse to be comforted by anything less than power and control. Sacrificing life is the price of keeping peace. Others are fervent followers of their visionary messiah. Look, here is our savior, deliverer, and mighty healer. When this one, or that one, fails to conserve enough, be liberal enough, or progressive enough people cry impeach, impeach.

God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

And on earth, people are like waves of the sea tossed to and fro. Like Rachel, we refuse to be comforted. God desires to blesses us with Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

This Advent I have watched and waited. I never considered how Fear and Faith have everything in common. They both have eyes to see, ears to hear, and move us with decisive actions.

Fear opens our eyes and ears to shame, guilt, and blame. It moves us with decisive actions where we fight, play dead, or run.

Faith opens our eyes and ears to God’s mercy, grace, and love. It moves us with decisive action to live with Hope, Peace, and Joy. Faith always leads us in WORSHIP!

Hear the Good News! God is with us in our fear! God is with us like a Shepherd who delivers his sheep from evil. Once delivered from evil, the Good Shepherd tends to the sheep’s wounds. The Shepherd knows the sheep by name. The sheep know the sound of the Shepherd’s voice.

Fear refuses to be comforted. This is why there will always be wars, rumors of war, famines, and nation against nation.

Faith receives Christ, the King of Heaven and Earth. Christ prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies — shame, guilt, blame, fighting, playing dead, and running. Faith means we give God our fear to receive the fruit of Love: Hope, Peace, and Joy.

Advent means we watch and wait for the coming Christ. Fear is for giving to God. Faith is for receiving Christ. Amen.

Joy to the World! And on earth, peace be with those who receive God’s blessed favor.

1. https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamiecartereurope/2020/12/15/how-you-can-see-the-once-in-10-lifetimes-christmas-star-or-star-of-bethlehem-this-week-with-your-naked-eyes/?sh=4a29dae93299 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)