"PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS"

A Sermon By

Philip A. C. Clarke
"PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS"

INTRODUCTION One Sunday morning, a neatly dressed man disrupted a worship service in a New York City church. Right in the middle of the service, this man stood up in the balcony and called out in a loud voice, "I have a word from the Lord!" Immediately the ever-alert ushers sprang like gazelles up the balcony stairs and ushered the man out the front doors and on to the street. It could have happened here.

Thomas Long of Princeton Seminary, commenting on this event, had this to say,

"There's a kind of irony here. Week after week, those of us who preach stand in the pulpit and announce implicitly or explicitly, "I have a word from the Lord!" No one usually complains - not usually anyway. No alarmed ushers bound into the pulpit to drag us away. But let a stranger stand up in the balcony with a word, and all decorum breaks loose. An unexpected voice from an unexpected angle.

Now, in all probability, the fellow in the balcony was a crank, maybe running a quart or two low on reality. But let's not miss the point of the story. Maybe, just maybe, the man was Isaiah, with a true and disturbing word from the Lord, or perhaps he was Ezekiel...half crank, half prophet, visionary and eccentric. We'll never know. The point here is that God's word often comes from the balcony. And it surprises us...disturbs us...embarrasses us...coming from places we least expect it. How like our God!

DEVELOPMENT John the Baptist was one of those balcony types of people. Dressed in wild animal skins, eating locusts and wild honey, John the Baptist would stand out in any congregation. Yet this man was the man God chose to announce the coming of the Messiah. The figure of this man broods over this season of Advent when we are preparing ourselves for Christmas.

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord...make His paths straight.'"

During this season of Advent, you and I are preparing our hearts to celebrate Christ's coming. We're buying our gifts, sending out our cards, planning our parties, setting up our trees. The preparation and anticipation are all a part of the joy of Christmas. But, are such preparations sufficient and adequate for this day? I think in light of John's message that there are some other things we need to be thinking about and doing if we are truly going to be ready for Christmas. Let me suggest three things to take out of here with you.

REPENTANCE Preparation for the coming of Christ means - first of all - repentance. A "touch" of repentance.

Luke reminds us that John came preaching a pretty stern message of repentance. How else would one prepare for the coming of the Son of God. The
Bible tells us that God is "holy, holy, holy"! R. C. Sproul reminds us that when those who wrote the Bible wanted to add emphasis they made use of repetition. Yes, God is "holy, holy, holy". He is a God of righteousness and justice. How else could "unholy people" such as you and I possibly receive the Lord's own Anointed One unless we do a bit of repenting.

C. S. Lewis once put it like this,

"Christianity has no message for those who do not realize they are sinners."

Friend, that's you and me. We don't like to be reminded that we are "sinners" and that God is righteous. But that's the way it is and if we are going to prepare for His coming, we'd better do something about those dark and shadowy corners of our lives. Clean up our act, as they say.

I think this is a side to Christmas that the world tends to pass by easily. We extract those appealing parts of Christmas - the sweetness of bells ringing, the salutations of good cheer, the unselfish giving of gifts...but so many have no concept of the deeper meaning of this Christ Event - that a Holy God has invaded an unholy world.

Down in Lake Worth, Florida two high school boys drew suspensions from school for eating so much garlic that no one could stand having them around. The boys said that their garlic binge began when they read somewhere that garlic has properties for cleansing blood and lowering blood pressure and so at that point each of them ate half a garlic head. For breakfast the next morning both boys consumed 3 or 4 more heads of garlic a piece.

Now when the teachers and other students complained about the smell of the garlic the boys simply laughed and went right on eating garlic. When confronted by school officials, one of the boys protested that the smell couldn't be all that bad! After all, he said,

"We were blowing in each other's face, and we couldn't sense a garlic smell..."

My point is that that's precisely the same approach many people tend to take toward sin and wrong doing. Knowing what is wrong, they laugh and flaunt their participation in the wrong. Everybody's doing it. They desensitize their own consciences by wallowing in the sin until the sin no longer smells bad to them. Then they act indignant that somebody should be so intolerant as to be bothered by that which no longer bothers them!

John's word from the balcony is the word of repentance. If there is something shoddy in our lives...something that is degrading...something beneath our dignity as children of God - then let's focus on it and get rid of it!

Motivational speaker Zig Ziglar says that when he was a boy, his mother told him to hoe two rows of beans. He was about eight years old. She showed him exactly how she wanted him to do it and she told him, "Now, when you get through, call me so I can come and look it over". When he finally got through as per her instructions, he called her to look it over. When she got there, she started shaking her head and said to him,
"Well, son, it looks like you're going to have to do this over. For most boys this would be perfectly all right. But you're not most boys...you're MY son! And MY son can do better than this..."

That's John's message to us from the balcony. God's children can do better than this. Thus the first step in preparing for the coming of the King of Kings is a bit of repentance for some and perhaps a lot of it for others.

**RIGHTEOUS LIVING**

The second is a commitment to righteous living. Now, you may think that this is redundant. Repentance involves a commitment to righteous living. That's not what most people think of when they think of repentance. They think of being sorry for a mistake and making a promise not to make the same mistake again. They fail to see that repentance involves a complete change of direction.

I was thinking this past week as I prepared today's sermon that it was on this very day eleven years ago - December the 8th, 1980 - that something happened here in this city over at Central Park West and West 72nd Street that shook a lot of people around this world. I wonder if you know what I'm referring to...how good is your memory? Eleven years ago today Mark David Chapman killed John Lennon, the former Beatle, outside his apartment at the Dakota. Mark David Chapman said recently that he feels great remorse for killing Lennon. But he went on to say, however, that the slaying doesn't make him an evil person.

"You can't judge a man's life by one act" he said. "Before I became 'the man who murdered John Lennon' I was basically a decent person".

This he said from his isolation cell up at Attica State Prison where he is serving 20 years to life. And in a newspaper interview earlier this month, Chapman said he suffered mental dissolution for years before killing the former Beatle eleven years ago tonight.

"I'm not an evil person. Like everybody, there's a small part within me that's evil...and that's what took over in my case."

In a sense, I think Chapman is right for there is a little bad hidden there in the best of us. And there is also a little good - a lot of good - in the worst of us. None of us is all angel or all demon.

A young man filled out an application for admission to a University in this land. In response to a request to "List Your Personal Strengths" he wrote,

"Sometimes I am trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent."

And where the form said, "List Your Personal Weaknesses", he wrote,

"Sometimes I am not trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent."
The point is that none of us are perfect. Nevertheless, as Chapman's example clearly shows, if we are satisfied with just a little of the worst in us, we run a tragic risk for that little bit of the worst has within it the potential to destroy our lives and to devastate those we love and cause a lot of trouble in this world.

Something that C. S. Lewis says in his writings came to mind,

"Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make everyday are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of. An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or in anger today is the loss of a bridge or railway line or bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible."

You may remember the story about the woman who lived next door to a private zoo. She informed the police one day that she had a skunk hiding out down in her dark cellar. The officer advised her to,

"Open the cellar door and make a trail of bread crumbs from the dark cellar to the garden and wait for the skunk to follow it outside."

Half an hour later the woman called the police a second time and said,

"I did what you told me to do...now I have two skunks down in my cellar....please help me."

It's not enough to try to reform one or two bad habits. What we need is a change of heart. What we need is a new orientation. What we need is a total commitment to righteous, godly living. How do we prepare for the Lord's coming? By first repenting of our wrong doing and then, secondly, seeking after righteousness. But move on...briefly and -

RECEIVE GOD'S GRACE

Finally, we prepare by receiving God's grace.

We are not disciples of John the Baptist, as much as we admire him and as much as we need to heed his word. We are disciples of Jesus. Even though we repent of our sins and seek to live righteous lives, we know that we do not have the power within ourselves to live as we ought to live. Thus, we throw ourselves on His mercy. We depend upon His grace and His love to supply us...unworthy as we are and may feel at times...a righteousness that only He can give.

Country comedian Jerry Clower once told about a lady he knew down in Amite County. She lived near a construction site and workers were putting a tar roof on a building near her house. Now this lady had 16 children - or young 'uns, as Jerry would call them. One day she lost one of her children. She got to hunting him and discovered that he had fallen into a fifty gallon drum of black roofing tar at the nearby construction site. She reached down and hauled him up and took a look at him and shoved him back down in to that drum of tar. Then she said,
"Boy...it would be a lot easier to have another one than
to clean you up!"

I think that God must feel that way about some of His children at times.
It would be easier to have another one than to try to clean us up. But...but
He does clean us up. He gives us what we need to make that fresh start. And
to me that is the "good news" of Advent and of Christmas. Because of the
coming of the Christ Child each of us can make that new beginning. As you
prepare for His coming and brush up against Eternal Truth once again, leave
room for some repentance, room for righteous living, room to receive His love.

SHALL WE PRAY

Make us sensitive to Your presence and Your nearness in
these moments, O God. Wrestle with each of us in the
deep corners of our lives where there lurk some dark stains...shadows that
need the light of Your presence.

We offer now to You, dear God, our sins.

We release to You our anxieties...our inner tensions...open our hearts
to receive Your coming in Christ that we then shall be able to sing on
Christmas Eve with new and deeper meaning:

"All is calm. And all is bright"

Amen
BOTHRAL PRAYER: December 8, 1991

GOD, OUR FATHER...

Once again, you have brought us to this joyous season of the year when "there's a song in the air"...and the world around us begins to take on a new look.

Because of Bethlehem...because of the star and the stable...because of Mary and Joseph and the child in the manger, we know YOU as ONE who is not just "up there" or "out there"...but rather as ONE who is very much a part of our life...here with us now...identified with infants and well as infinity.

And, we meditate this hour upon that ONE LIFE, born of Mary...and remembering how she "pondered" the meaning of that Holy Birth.

We, too, would "ponder" the meaning of that life in the days of this glad season...of what Christmas can and should mean to us.

We remember His lowly toil and His lonely way.
   His lifting words, His deeds of caring...
   His friendship for the defeated,
   His hope for the discouraged...

The carols take us back to see again the warmth and the wonder, the tenderness of Your coming.

Our minds comprehend as never before the glory and the joy of the deep meaning of this divine event.

In His coming, You have shown us that Your love is for everyone.

   No one is too small or too weak.
   No one is too poor or too lowly...
   No one is too selfish or too sinful...to RECEIVE the "GLAD TIDINGS" of

Melt any hostility we harbor as we meditate on the One who came to love and to forgive.

OPEN our hearts to Your coming, dear God, that you may come into our lives and make them new...then we shall be able to sing about ourselves:

   "All is calm. All is bright".

In the spirit of the Child of Bethlehem, we pray.
INTRODUCTION

Remaining in a prayerful spirit, let us enter into a time of silent meditation as we continue with our ADVENT journey toward Bethlehem... toward Christmas and the Child who grew to be our King.

In quietness, let each now pray as the heart may prompt.

MEDITATION

"He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

"The grass withers, the flower fades; but the Word of our God will stand for ever!"

"And as many as touched Him were made whole."

PRAYERS / LORD'S PRAYER

Touch with Healing, O God, those whom we mention in our prayers...

Comfort the bereaved and the broken hearted among us, and be especially close to those who in recent days have lost a loved one... a parent, a sister, brother, child.

Answer the unspoken prayers whispered in the deep places of our lives, spoken in the name and spirit of Jesus who taught us to say when we pray:

"Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory, forever. Amen."
PASTORAL PRAYER: December 8, 1991

O GOD, OUR FATHER...

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ANNOUNCEMENTS: Sunday, December 8, 1991

GREETING / VISITORS

A. We greet the visitors in the congregation...delighted you are here with us...and hope that we shall have opportunity to greet you personally.

B. Join us downstairs for coffee. Fill out a visitor card. Or sign a Guest Book in the narthex. Come - worship with us on other Sundays. Work with us, too...in the outreach programs of our church.

C. Doing Lord's work here since 1837. We minister in the name of Christ and it is in His loving spirit that we greet all of you...

PARISH CONCERNS

A. Parish concerns are "high-lighted" in the bulletin. Review them on your own noting that next Sunday will be special as the children present their annual interpretation of the Nativity...have a party together around one o'clock....and the Adult Fellowship Christmas Caroling session is "in the works" for late Sunday afternoon.

B. Note the envelope in the pews for those who wish to remember loved ones with Christmas flowers....your generous flower gifts make it possible for us to hang wreaths and have a tree in the Russell Room as well as poinsettias on the chancel steps two weeks from today and Christmas Eve.

C. We're "wrapping up" the Financial Canvass...we still hope to hear from some 50 people as soon as possible regarding a pledge for 1992. We've done so well thus far and let's complete the job...reach our goal of $150,000. As of today, we're up to ___ pledges totalling $ _______

LONGER SERVICE

A. We have a lot going on right now and this is one of the longer services of the year...usually on this Sunday it's 12:15 before we head down for the refreshments. Remember those numerous Sundays across the year when we are through before twelve o'clock...Those accumulated minutes get used up today and again next Sunday. Hopefully, you'll all "hang in"...

OFFERING

"It is more blessed to give than to receive!"
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Park Avenue United Methodist Church
106 East 86th Street
New York, New York 10028
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Bible tells us that God is "holy, holy, holy"! R. C. Sproul reminds us that when those who wrote the Bible wanted to add emphasis they made use of repetition. Yes, God is "holy, holy, holy". He is a God of righteousness and justice. How else could "unholy people" such as you and I possibly receive the Lord's own Anointed One unless we do a bit of repenting.

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The second is a commitment to righteous living. Now, you may think that this is redundant. Repentance involves a commitment to righteous living. That's not what most people think of when they think of repentance. They think of being sorry for a mistake and making a promise not to make the same mistake again. They fail to see that repentance involves a complete change of direction.

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**RECEIVE GOD'S GRACE**

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SHALL WE PRAY

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We release to You our anxieties...our inner tensions...open our hearts to receive Your coming in Christ that we then shall be able to sing on Christmas Eve with new and deeper meaning:

"All is calm. And all is bright"

Amen
ANTHEM: "Heavenly Light"

"Sent from heaven, thy rays were given on great and small to shine, O Light Divine! May each soul in sorrow's night see the heavenly light! Thou blessing to all creation, lead us to our salvation! All those whose feet may falter, lead unto the sacred altar! Oh, shine from above, Divine Light of Love! Show us the way unto our God, we pray! Thou our beacon and guide shalt be! Light Divine, we praise Thee!"

ANTHEM: "Let All Mortal Flesh"

"Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand; ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessings in His hand. Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand. King of Kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth He stood, Lord of Lords, in human vesture, in the body and the blood. He will give to all the faithful His own self for heavenly food. Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way, as the Light of Light descendeth from the realms of endless day, that the powers of hell may vanish as the darkness clears away. At His feet the six-winged seraph, cherubim, with sleepless eye, veil their faces to the presence, as with ceaseless voice they cry; Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Lord most high!"

FOR THOSE WHO SING

New members are always welcome to audition to sing in the Choir. Rehearsals are held Sunday mornings at 9:30 in the downstairs Choir Room.

THE ADVENT WREATH

The Advent Wreath with its four red candles is one of the traditions of the Christmas Season. Our Advent Wreath - made possible through the kindness of one of our members - is on the second chancel steps.

Today, on the Second Sunday of Advent, we light the second candle - the candle of Peace. Today's candle lighters are Mary and Michael Joyce.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

Those wishing to give to the fund for Christmas decorations in the Church are invited to use the envelope in the pew.

"HOUNDS OF HEAVEN"

The "Hounds of Heaven" will meet on Tuesday evening at 6:30 in Fellowship Hall. Lynn Clarke is leading the class in the study of "Your God Is Too Small" by J. P. Phillips. New friends are most welcome. Old ones, too.

ALDERSGATE CLASS

The Aldersgate Class meets on Wednesday evening at 7:30 in Fellowship Hall. The study and discussion of the Ten Commandments will be led by Anna Delson and Janet Ernst. All are most welcome to join us.

PICK UP YOUR COPY

Be sure to pick up your copy of the December issue of our monthly news sheet "A Word In Edgeways". Copies are by the door in the narthex as well as on the table in the Russell Room.
PLEDGE CARDS ARE STILL COMING IN

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HOLIDAY PECANS AVAILABLE

See Marlene Mare for your one pound bag of delicious holiday pecans. For $6.50 you just can't go wrong! It's a bargain. They make lovely gifts for friends at work.
Disillusioned by the shifting standards of modern morality? Disturbed by the cynicism of political correctness? Go back to the basics with the Aldersgate Class which is beginning a study of the Ten Commandments.

THUNDER FROM THE MOUNTAIN by John A. Stroman is the text being used. Meetings are at 7:30 on Wednesday evenings. Discussions will be led by Anna Delson and Janet Ernst. Please join us!
Dear Members and Friends,

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Words cannot adequately express the depth of my feelings for the wonderful "day" you gave me last Sunday as I celebrated 35 years as your pastor. The many thoughtful expressions of your affection and appreciation will stay with me always. You have been most generous in your judgments and infinitely considerate in your kindness. For all this I am profoundly grateful.

The unveiling of the lovely portrait at the altar left me speechless!

The "memory book" of letters and pictures, the poem, the presence of our Bishop and our District Superintendent and so many members - present and past - and personal friends from across the years of my life...completely overwhelmed me.

The many arrangements from the festivities to the food were delightful. And all were a complete surprise! I had no idea that anything like this was in the offing.

Lynn joins me in saying "thank you", too, to all of you for your love, your many, many kindnesses and for this "once in a lifetime" day!

Affectionately,

Philip Clarke

PS: For those who didn't get to see the portrait or the "memory book", we have both downstairs in the Russell Room...at the rear, next to the choir room.
NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome into the membership of our Church the following persons. We trust that this fellowship will be a real blessing to them as it has been to us and we welcome the contributions which they will make to the richness of our Christian life together.

Mr. Kenneth J. Anderson: 516 East 86th Street, PHC, New York, New York 10028. Transfer of Church Letter. Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Center Reach, New York


Ms. Catherine Campbell: 268 West 84th Street, #3C, New York, New York 10024. Transfer of Church Letter. First Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia.

Miss Kristin A. Cole: 328 East 78th Street, New York, New York 10021. Transfer of Church Letter. Pinnacle Lutheran Church, Rochester, New York


Mr. Antonio C. Kho: 506 East 88th Street, #3A, New York, New York 10128. Transfer of Church Letter. First Free United Methodist Church, San Francisco, California


Mr. Mark Kris: 108 East 82nd Street, New York, New York 10028. Associate Member. Home Church: New Hackensack Reformed Church, Wappingers Falls, New York

Mrs. Mary Ellen Kris: 108 East 82nd Street, New York, New York 10028. Associate Member. Home Church: New Hackensack Reformed Church, Wappingers Falls, New York


Mr. T.A. McKinney: 128 East 85th Street, New York, New York 10028. Associate Member. Home Church: Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Nashville, Tennessee.


Mrs. Laura Moorefield: 233 East 86th Street, #20B, New York, New York 10028. Transfer of Church Letter. First United Methodist Church, Tifton, Georgia.


Mr. Sam Potter: 314 Union Street, #3, Brooklyn, New York 11231. Transfer of Church Letter. Moville United Methodist Church, Moville, Iowa.

Mr. Mark Raker: 10-53 47th Road, Long Island City, New York 11101. Transfer of Church Letter. Pearl River United Methodist Church, Pearl River, New York. (718/361-2906) (988-7140)


Mr. Michael D. Vann: 2500 Johnson Avenue, #20F, Riverdale, New York 10463. Transfer of Church Letter. Israel CME Church, Gary, Indiana.


AN INVITATION

The coffee hour today is in honor of our new members. All are invited to come downstairs to the Russell Room and share in adding words of welcome to these new friends who now become members of the Church.

12/8/91
ANTHEM: "Heavenly Light"

"Sent from heaven, thy rays were given on great and small to shine, O Light Divine! May each soul in sorrow's night see the heavenly light! Thou blessing to all creation, lead us to our salvation! All those whose feet may falter, lead unto the sacred altar! Oh, shine from above, Divine Light of Love! Show us the way unto our God, we pray! Thou our beacon and guide shalt be! Light Divine, we praise Thee!"

ANTHEM: "Let All Mortal Flesh"

"Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand; ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessings in His hand. Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand. King of Kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth He stood, Lord of Lords, in human vesture, in the body and the blood. He will give to all the faithful His own self for heavenly food. Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way, as the Light of Light descendeth from the realms of endless day, that the powers of hell may vanish as the darkness clears away. At His feet the six-winged seraph, cherubim, with sleepless eye, veil their faces to the presence, as with ceaseless voice they cry; Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Lord most high!"

FOR THOSE WHO SING

New members are always welcome to audition to sing in the Choir. Rehearsals are held Sunday mornings at 9:30 in the downstairs Choir Room.

THE ADVENT WREATH

The Advent Wreath with its four red candles is one of the traditions of the Christmas Season. Our Advent Wreath - made possible through the kindness of one of our members - is on the second chancel steps. Today, on the Second Sunday of Advent, we light the second candle - the candle of Peace. Today's candle lighters are Mary and Michael Joyce.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

Those wishing to give to the fund for Christmas decorations in the Church are invited to use the envelope in the pew.

"HOUNDS OF HEAVEN"

The "Hounds of Heaven" will meet on Tuesday evening at 6:30 in Fellowship Hall. Lynn Clarke is leading the class in the study of "Your God Is Too Small" by J. P. Phillips. New friends are most welcome. Old ones, too.

ALDERSGATE CLASS

The Aldersgate Class meets on Wednesday evening at 7:30 in Fellowship Hall. The study and discussion of the Ten Commandments will be led by Anna Delson and Janet Ernst. All are most welcome to join us.

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289-6997

MINISTER
Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke

STUDENT ASSISTANT
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Mrs. Judith Keisman

Mr. Roberto Meriles
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John 1:5 NIV
Photo by CPH
CPH © 1991
SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT
December 8, 1991

ORDER OF WORSHIP
11 A.M.

ORGAN "Now Comes the Savior" (Bach)

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 211 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (Verses 1 - 4)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (seated)

Lord, forgive the dimness of our sight and the good we do not see; the quickness of our tongues and the harm we work on others through intemperate speech; the heaviness of our hands, so slow to help; the dullness of our hearts, so reluctant to believe. Forgive us for coming to terms with an age that has so little time for You; and for starving our souls in the pursuit of goals and prizes that are here today and gone tomorrow. We believe that You are able to forgive. Dear God, forgive us now, as on Your name we call. In the name of Christ, we pray.

SILENT MEDITATION - WORDS OF ASSURANCE - LORD'S PRAYER

***

THE LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE

A SONG BY THE CHILDREN

THE RECEIPTION OF NEW MEMBERS (No. 48)

***

ANTHEM "Heavenly Light" (Kopylow)

SCRIPTURE Luke 3: 1 - 6 (Page 891)

PASTORAL PRAYER

PARISH CONCERNS

ANTHEM "Let All Mortal Flesh" Arr. by Holst

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 250 "Once in Royal David's City"

SERMON "Preparing for Christmas" (Mr. Clarke)

HYMN NO. 238 "Angels We Have Heard On High"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN "Fugue in G" (Bach)

*** Interval for Ushering

LAY READER

We welcome Joanne Alban to the lectern today. A native of the Bronx, a graduate of Fordham University with a BA degree in French, Joanne is currently studying Accounting and Hotel Management at NYU. Here in the Church she sings with the Choir.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar today are from the Finnish Lutheran Church congregation and the Finlandia Foundation to commemorate Finland's 74th Independence Day.

GREETERS AND USHERS

The greeters today are Dee Schaffield and Walter Spencer. The ushers are Susan Langley, Sandra Chauncey, Cary Danford, James Perkins, Grace and Al Thomas and Joyce and Craig West.

AN INVITATION

Coffee and tea will be served in the Russell Room following the service. Members and friends are invited to share in these moments of warmth made possible for us today by Lili and Richmond Bates, Bibi Banoo, Diane and Brad Barnes and Jennifer Karim.

CHURCH SCHOOL AND NURSERY CARE

Sessions of Church School for children are offered Sunday mornings from ten-thirty to twelve. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is available on the fourth floor in the Day School Room.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

The Adult Bible Class meets on Sunday morning at 9:30 in Fellowship Hall. A study of the book of Job is now being studied. Janet Ernst is class leader.
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A Sermon By

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December 11, 1994
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DEVELOPMENT Today's lesson centers on John the Baptist. I wonder what John would have thought of today's Madonna. Chances are, he'd be a bit rough on her...not so much by her music, but by her lifestyle. After all, John was a preacher of righteousness. He wanted all of Israel to repent. He wanted people to "shape up"...straighten out their messy lives. His message was not just "one dimensional", as we might imagine. There are some things in his message that we would do well to reflect upon. It was challenging. It was most challenging.

John, you'll recall from your Bible study, announced the coming of the Messiah. Of course, his announcement came some thirty years after the birth of Christ, but his announcement is just as important as any of the others. His role was to prepare the way for Christ's coming. And how do we prepare for the coming of Christ? According to John, there were three ways. And they can be summed up like this: if you have wealth, share it. If you are in a position of trust, honor it. And if you have power and wield influence, don't abuse it.

We're going to hang some thoughts on these three branches that are attached to the main trunk of his message of repentance. We'll take them one by one and see how they touch us.

WEALTH, SHARE IT Yes, first...if you have wealth, share it. The multitudes came to John and asked, "What should we do?" And he said,

"He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none, and he who has food, let him do likewise."  
(Luke 3: 10 and 11)

Christmas is many things, but above all else, it is a time of sharing. We exchange gifts with one another, but many of you will go beyond that. You will drop money into the Salvation Army kettle. You will write checks to worthy community projects. Some will make a year-end gift to the church of your choice. There is something about this season that helps us to see beyond ourselves and to the needs of others.

Of course, not everyone is able to give to others this year. Which reminds me of a letter that a member of a church sent back in response to the stewardship drive in his church. He wrote,
"Dear Pastor,

In reply to your request to send a check, I wish to inform you that the present condition of my bank account makes it impossible, almost impossible. My shattered financial condition is due to Federal Laws, State Laws, City Laws, corporation laws, mother-in-laws, brother-in-laws and outlaws. Through these laws I am compelled to pay a business tax, amusement tax, head tax, school tax, gas tax, light tax, water tax, sales tax, even my brains are taxed. I am required to get a business license, a dog license, not to mention a marriage license. I am also required to contribute to every organization or society which the genius of man is capable of bringing to life. Women's relief, unemployment relief, every hospital and charitable organization in our city, including the Red Cross, the purple cross and the double cross.

For my own safety I am required to carry life insurance, property insurance, liability insurance, accident insurance, burglar insurance, business insurance, earthquake insurance, tornado insurance, unemployment insurance, fire insurance.

I am inspected, expected, respected, dejected, rejected, examined, re-examined, informed, reformed, summoned, fined, commanded and compelled until I supply an inexhaustible supply of money for every known need, desire or hope of the human race. Simply because I refuse to donate something or other, I am boycotted, talked about, lied about, held up, held down, robbed until I am ruined.

I tell you honestly...had not the unexpected happened I could not enclose this check. The wolf that comes to so many doors now-a-days, just had pups in the kitchen. I sold them. Here's the money and I do hope it helps. Merry Christmas!"

There are times when we all feel that way. The demands upon us come from every side, especially in the month of December. And yet...the gift of Christmas is a gift that must be passed on to be enjoyed. Christ comes into our lives bringing unmerited love and only the coldest of hearts will refuse to let Him in. Only the most selfish of spirits will not reach out in generosity and respond to others.

How true it is that our enjoyment at Christmas will be in direct proportion to the joy we bring to others through our gifts and our giving. Point one: If you have wealth, don't be afraid to share it. It will make a difference....for you...

TRUST, HONOR IT

Here is John's second prescription for preparing for His coming. If you are in a position of trust, honor it.

Even those tax collectors who came to John to be baptized found themselves asking John,

"Teacher....what shall we do?" And John replied, "Collect no more than is appointed you".
We know a bit about the tax collectors of that day. They collected taxes on behalf of the Roman government. They were despised as collaborators. They were well known for their lack of ethics, often adding extra fees to what they collected and this, of course, lined their pockets. John is not telling them to give up their jobs. What he tells them is to exercise honesty in their work. Even though it's a bit of a dirty business, they are in positions of trust. And they need to honor that trust.

I sometimes find myself wondering if honesty is disappearing this our land. A woman was telling me some time back about an experience she had standing in line in a subway in Japan. She noticed a pile of money lying on a counter, unattended. Others in the area also noticed it and she watched with mounting disbelief as each person left it right where it was. She said that,

"Finally, I was so glad to see one woman walk over and pick up the bills. But she just took them to someone else to ask if that person had left them there. When he said no, she put the money back."

One wonders how long some unclaimed money would sit on a counter in our city, in our country. Something scary, something not so good is happening to us. Absolute principles of conduct have been slowly replaced with moral relativism. As a result more cheating goes on, more deception occurs.

Hear this. Christiana Hoff Sommers published an article sometime back entitled "Ethics Without Virtue". In it she criticized the way ethics is being taught in American colleges. Students taking college ethics, she pointed out, debate abortion and euthanasia and capital punishment and DNA research and the ethics of transplant surgery in their classes while they learn very little and almost next to nothing about private decency, honesty and personal responsibility or honor.

A colleague took her to task for what she had to say in her article telling her that she would continue to focus in her classroom on the issues of social injustice - women's oppression and corruption in big business and the transgressions of multinational corporations in Third World Countries. The colleague said to her,

"You are not going to have moral people until you have moral institutions. You will not have moral citizens until you have a moral government."

And she made it clear that Ms. Sommers was wasting time and even doing harm by promoting "bourgeois" virtues and not awakening the social conscience of her students. Well, at the end of that semester, that very same colleague came into Ms. Sommers office carrying a stack of exams and looking rather upset. "What's wrong?" asked Ms. Sommers of her colleague. She said,

"Just about every one of them cheated on their social justice 'take-home' finals. They all plagiarized."

It turned out that more than half of her student in her ethics class had copied from secondary sources. "What are you going to do?" asked Ms. Sommers. Her colleague replied, "I would very much like to borrow a copy of your article on ethics without virtue."
A hard but very important lesson to learn. Integrity is the cement of society. If you have a position of trust, whether it's in business or in government or in the church or in the home, honor it. That is the second way we prepare for His coming - by living trustworthy lives of honesty.

**POWER DON'T ABUSE IT**

And the final way, if you have power...don't abuse it. Soldiers came to John, the Baptist, and asked, "And what shall we do?" John's answer was "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation". Don't abuse your power and don't always have a heavy hand as you wield authority.

We live in a time when the word power gets a bit of a going-over. White males are often on the defensive. Why? Because they're seen as having power, power in business, in government, in the home, the church. Women and minorities are often seen as being without power. 'Course it's an overgeneralization, but it's also historically true.

When did women get the right to vote in this "the land of the free and the home of the brave"? 1920, wasn't it? Switzerland didn't let women vote until 23 years ago. We're not talking about ancient history...we're talking about recent decades. And women and minorities are still at a disadvantage. Power is distributed inequitably.

But all of us at one time or another may find ourselves in a position of authority. A parent has power over a child, an employer over an employee. A teacher has power over his or her students and even a pastor has the power of the pulpit. John is saying to us, if you have power, be careful how you use it. Do not abuse it.

And when you come right down to it, there really is no better example of the tragic abuse of power than King Herod. Remember the young King Herod had been an exceptional ruler. It was he who erected palaces and fortresses and temples and aqueducts and cities and the grand new Temple in the heart of Jerusalem. He it was who stimulated the economy and trade and commerce. He was so highly respected that he would actually go down in history as "Herod, the Great!"

But his life unfortunately deteriorated into paranoia. He was forever writing Rome to seek permission to execute one or two of his very own sons for treason. And finally, even his friend, Augustus, admitted, "I'd rather be Herod's pig than one of his sons".

And within the Christian community, Herod will long be remembered for his decree that all male children in his kingdom under two years of age should be put to death - slaughtered. That was his plan for eliminating a potential threat to his throne. Of course it didn't work. That tiny baby who would become the King of Kings escaped from Bethlehem even as his soldiers arrived on the scene. It was Herod who had John executed after John had the courage to point out some of his moral lapses and failures. How could a man fall so far? Power does something to people. We've seen it in our time. The abuse of power is a terrible sin, whether in the workplace or in the home. "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely". Who was it who said that?

**SUMMARY**

So, how does one prepare for His coming? John the Baptist puts it to us quite openly and plainly. If you have wealth, share it. If you're in a position of trust, honor it. If you have power, don't abuse it.
Try always to follow the example of Jesus. And remember that He had it all, but He gave it up because of a great love, a love that even today continues to reach out and touch people and in so doing makes a difference!

**PRAYER**  
Make us sensitive to Your nearness and to Your presence in these moments, O God. Help us as we prepare for Christmas...for the birth of the Christ Child. Help us to search our own hearts and to wrestle with our selfishness and our sinfulness. Help us to simplify our lives that we be not so concerned with glitter and the tinsel of life that we miss the real thing....of how You didst come into our world as a little baby. In the spirit of the Living Christ, we pray. Amen.
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"He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none, and he who has food, let him do likewise."  
(Luke 3: 10 and 11)

Christmas is many things, but above all else, it is a time of sharing. We exchange gifts with one another, but many of you will go beyond that. You will drop money into the Salvation Army kettle. You will write checks to worthy community projects. Some will make a year-end gift to the church of your choice. There is something about this season that helps us to see beyond ourselves and to the needs of others.

Of course, not everyone is able to give to others this year. Which reminds me of a letter that a member of a church sent back in response to the stewardship drive in his church. He wrote,
"Dear Pastor,

In reply to your request to send a check, I wish to inform you that the present condition of my bank account makes it impossible, almost impossible. My shattered financial condition is due to Federal Laws, State Laws, City Laws, corporation laws, mother-in-laws, brother-in-laws and outlaws. Through these laws I am compelled to pay a business tax, amusement tax, head tax, school tax, gas tax, light tax, water tax, sales tax, even my brains are taxed. I am required to get a business license, a dog license, not to mention a marriage license. I am also required to contribute to every organization or society which the genius of man is capable of bringing to life. Women's relief, unemployment relief, every hospital and charitable organization in our city, including the Red Cross, the purple cross and the double cross!

For my own safety I am required to carry life insurance, property insurance, liability insurance, accident insurance, burglary insurance, business insurance, earthquake insurance, tornado insurance, unemployment insurance, fire insurance.

I am inspected, expected, respected, dejected, rejected, examined, re-examined, informed, reformed, summoned, fined, commanded and compelled until I supply an inexhaustible supply of money for every known need, desire or hope of the human race. Simply because I refuse to donate something or other, I am boycotted, talked about, lied about, held up, held down, robbed until I am ruined.

I tell you honestly....had not the unexpected happened I could not enclose this check. The wolf that comes to so many doors now-a-days, just had pups in the kitchen. I sold them. Here's the money and I do hope it helps. Merry Christmas!"

There are times when we all feel that way. The demands upon us come from every side, especially in the month of December. And yet...the gift of Christmas is a gift that must be passed on to be enjoyed. Christ comes into our lives bringing unmerited love and only the coldest of hearts will refuse to let Him in. Only the most selfish of spirits will not reach out in generosity and respond to others.

How true it is that our enjoyment at Christmas will be in direct proportion to the joy we bring to others through our gifts and our giving. Point one: If you have wealth, don't be afraid to share it. It will make a difference...for you...

TRUST, HONOR IT Here is John's second prescription for preparing for His coming. If you are in a position of trust, honor it. Even those tax collectors who came to John to be baptized found themselves asking John,

"Teacher....what shall we do?" And John replied, "Collect no more than is appointed you".
We know a bit about the tax collectors of that day. They collected taxes on behalf of the Roman government. They were despised as collaborators. They were well known for their lack of ethics, often adding extra fees to what they collected and this, of course, lined their pockets. John is not telling them to give up their jobs. What he tells them is to exercise honesty in their work. Even though it's a bit of a dirty business, they are in positions of trust. And they need to honor that trust.

I sometimes find myself wondering if honesty is disappearing this our land. A woman was telling me some time back about an experience she had standing in line in a subway in Japan. She noticed a pile of money lying on a counter, unattended. Others in the area also noticed it and she watched with mounting disbelief as each person left it right where it was. She said that,

"Finally, I was so glad to see one woman walk over and pick up the bills. But she just took them to someone else to ask if that person had left them there. When he said no, she put the money back."

One wonders how long some unclaimed money would sit on a counter in our city, in our country. Something scary, something not so good is happening to us. Absolute principles of conduct have been slowly replaced with moral relativism. As a result more cheating goes on, more deception occurs.

Hear this. Christiana Hoff Sommers published an article sometime back entitled "Ethics Without Virtue". In it she criticized the way ethics is being taught in American colleges. Students taking college ethics, she pointed out, debate abortion and euthanasia and capital punishment and DNA research and the ethics of transplant surgery in their classes while they learn very little and almost next to nothing about private decency, honesty and personal responsibility or honor.

A colleague took her to task for what she had to say in her article telling her that she would continue to focus in her classroom on the issues of social injustice - women's oppression and corruption in big business and the transgressions of multinational corporations in Third World Countries. The colleague said to her,

"You are not going to have moral people until you have moral institutions. You will not have moral citizens until you have a moral government."

And she made it clear that Ms. Sommers was wasting time and even doing harm by promoting "bourgeois" virtues and not awakening the social conscience of her students. Well, at the end of that semester, that very same colleague came into Ms. Sommers office carrying a stack of exams and looking rather upset. "What's wrong?" asked Ms. Sommers of her colleague. She said,

"Just about every one of them cheated on their social justice 'take-home' finals. They all...borrowed...cheated"

It turned out that more than half of her student in her ethics class had copied from secondary sources. "What are you going to do?" asked Ms. Sommers. Her colleague replied, "I would very much like to borrow a copy of your article on ethics without virtue."
A hard but very important lesson to learn. Integrity is the cement of our society. If you have a position of trust, whether it's in business or in government or in the church or in the home, honor it. That is the second way we prepare for His coming - by living trustworthy lives of honesty.

**POWER, DON'T ABUSE IT**

And the final way, if you have power...don't abuse it. Soldiers came to John, the Baptist, and asked, "And what shall we do?" John's answer was "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation". Don't abuse your power and don't always have a heavy hand as you wield authority.

We live in a time when the word power gets a bit of a going-over. White males are often on the defensive. Why? Because they're seen as having power, power in business, in government, in the home, the church. Women and minorities are often seen as being without power. 'Course it's an overgeneralization, but it's also historically true.

When did women get the right to vote in this "the land of the free and the home of the brave"? 1920, wasn't it? Switzerland didn't let women vote until 1971 years ago. We're not talking about ancient history...we're talking about recent decades. And women and minorities are still at a disadvantage. Power is distributed inequitably.

But all of us at one time or another may find ourselves in a position of authority. A parent has power over a child, an employer over an employee. A teacher has power over his or her students and even a pastor has the power of the pulpit. John is saying to us, if you have power, be careful how you use it. Don't abuse it.

And when you come right down to it, there really is no better example of the tragic abuse of power than King Herod. Remember the young King Herod had been an exceptional ruler. It was he who erected palaces and fortresses and temples and aqueducts and cities and the grand new Temple in the heart of Jerusalem. He it was who stimulated the economy and trade and commerce. He was so highly respected that he would actually go down in history as "Herod, the Great!"

But his life unfortunately deteriorated into paranoia. He was forever writing Rome to seek permission to execute one or two of his very own sons for treason. And finally, even his friend, Augustus, admitted, "I'd rather be Herod's pig than one of his sons".

And within the Christian community, Herod will long be remembered for his decree that all mail children in his kingdom under two years of age should be put to death - slaughtered. That was his plan for eliminating a potential threat to his throne. Of course it didn't work. That tiny baby who would become the King of Kings escaped from Bethlehem even as his soldiers arrived on the scene. It was Herod who had John executed after John had the courage to point out some of his moral lapses and failures. How could a man fall so far? Power does something to people. We've seen it in our time. The abuse of power is a terrible sin, whether in the workplace or in the home. "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely". Who was it who said that?

**SUMMARY**

So, how does one prepare for His coming? John the Baptist puts it to us quite openly and plainly. If you have wealth, share it. If you're in a position of trust, honor it. If you have power, don't abuse it.
Try always to follow the example of Jesus. And remember that He had it all, but He gave it up because of a great love, a love that even today continues to reach out and touch people and in so doing makes a difference!

PRAYER

Make us sensitive to Your nearness and to Your presence in these moments, O God. Help us as we prepare for Christmas...for the birth of the Christ Child. Help us to search our own hearts and to wrestle with our selfishness and our sinfulness. Help us to simplify our lives that we be not so concerned with glitter and the tinsel of life that we miss the real thing...of how You didst come into our world as a little baby. In the spirit of the Living Christ, we pray. Amen.
ANTHEM: "O Lord, Give Thy Holy Spirit"

"O Lord, give Thy Holy Spirit in to our heart, and lighten our understanding, that we may dwell in the fear of Thy name, all the days of our life; that we may know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

ANTHEM: "Springs in the Desert"

"'Say to them that are of a fearful heart: be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come and save you!' The wilderness and the solitary place shall be gald, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. For in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams flow in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool and the thirsty land springs of water.

A Highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness. The redeemed shall walk there and the ransomed of the Lord shall return with songs and everlasting joy. And sorrow and sighing shall flee away".

ORGAN POSTLUDE

The organ postlude - a final offering of our praise to God - is played after the Benediction. Time permitting, we invite you to share in the beauty of it.

FOR THOSE WHO SING

New members are always welcome to audition to sing in the Choir. Rehearsals are held on Sunday mornings at 9:30 in the downstairs Choir Room.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

Those wishing to give to the fund for Christmas flowers and wreaths are invited to use the envelope in the pew.

"HOUNDS OF HEAVEN"

The "Hounds of Heaven" will meet on Tuesday evening at 6:30 pm to continue with the discussion of Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway? Study material is available from Mr. Bonwitt. New friends as well as old friends are most welcome.

NEXT SUNDAY EVENING

The Adult Fellowship Christmas Caroling Party at the parsonage is next Sunday evening at 7 pm. Gary Klein will be at the piano and refreshments will be served. The address: 21 East 87th Street, Apt. 11D.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Our traditional Service of Carols and Candles will be held on Christmas Eve at eight o'clock. The sanctuary is usually well filled for this special service. If you're free to lend a hand with either the ushering or fellowship hour that follows, please share word with the minister.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are also needed to help with the Children's Christmas Party that follows the Christmas Pageant next Sunday afternoon. Be in touch with either Carl Condra or Tom DeBow if you can lend a hand.
SEVENTY-EIGHT TO GO

Pledge cards from members and friends of our Church are still being received in the church office. If you haven't turned in your pledge card for 1995, we invite you to do so today and help us "wrap up" the 1995 Financial Canvass.

As of Friday, December 9th, we have gratefully received 172 pledges totalling $141,524 toward our goal of $172,500 and 250 pledges. Another $31,000 from the remaining 78 pledges should get us there.

Pledges - large and small - are always gratefully received. They have a way of quickly adding up. Pledges are not mandatory, but it's something we encourage each member and friend of our church to consider.

COOKS' HELPERS NEEDED

We need several cooks' helpers for the Saturday Community Lunch Program for the Homeless for December the 24th and again on December 31st. It calls for about three hours, from 11 am to 2 pm. See Jane Chaney or call her at 718/515-9028 if you can lend a hand and share some Christmas cheer with those less fortunate.

THE ADVENT WREATH

The Advent Wreath with its four red candles is one of the traditions of the Christmas season. Our Advent wreath is on the third chancel step.

Today, on this Third Sunday of Advent, we light the Candle of Joy. Today's candle lighters are Cameron Berns, Nichola Tucker and Nicky Liotta. The prayer for this special moment has been written by Mary Kris, a member of this year's Confirmation Class.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Ilya Ryan DaCosta, infant son of Margaret and Howard DaCosta, is being presented today for Christian Baptism. Ilya was born on Monday, October 31st at St. Vincent's Hospital.

A ROSE ON THE ALTAR

The rose on the altar today is in honor of the birth of Tyler John Risley, infant son of Randi and John Risley and grandson of Mary Lou Risley, born on November 22, 1994. He is the great grandson of Dorothy B. Wolfgang who joins our church this morning.
PARK AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
106 East 86th Street
New York, N.Y. 10028
289-6997

MINISTER
Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke

ASSISTANT MINISTER
Mr. William Bonwitt

ORGANIST-CHOIR DIRECTOR
Dr. Lyndon Woodside

BUSINESS MANAGER
Mr. Joseph Cifuentes

CHURCH SECRETARY
Mrs. Judy Ferland

CUSTODIAN
Mr. Roberto Meriles

Come, thou long-awaited Jesus,
Rule in all our hearts alone.
THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT
December 11, 1994

ORDER OF WORSHIP
11 A. M.

ORGAN
"Adoration" Commette

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 220 "Angels From the Realms of Glory"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (seated)
We confess before You now, O God, our poor stewardship of life. We have squandered time, under-used our opportunities, misdirected our loyalties, resisted growth and grievously wasted the gift of love. In secret, we have worshipped the works of our minds and hands. The applause of the world has mattered more to us than fidelity to You. Make us duly penitent for these and all our sins. And let the mercy of Christ inspire us to humbler, purer ways in this time of worship. In His spirit, we offer our prayer of confession.

SILENT MEDITATION - WORDS OF ASSURANCE - LORD'S PRAYER

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LIGHTING OF THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

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ANTHEM "O Lord, Give Thy Holy Spirit" Tallis
SCRIPTURE Luke 3: 7 - 20 Page 891

PARISH CONCERNS

ANTHEM "Springs In The Desert" Jennings

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 224 "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice!"

SERMON "Preparing For Christmas" Mr. Clarke

HYMN NO. 245 "The First Noel"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN "Voluntary" Croft

*** Interval for Ushering

LAY READER

We welcome Douglas McPheters to the lectern today. A native of Maine and Massachusetts, and a graduate of Yale and also the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Doug is an attorney with the law firm of McPheters and Dankin. Father of John and Alec, Doug is the Chairman of the Membership Committee here in the church.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar are given in loving memory of Jane and William Brown, parents of Edward J. Brown, and Robert Bessey, father of Margaret Bessey Brown. They are the gift of Edward and Margaret Brown.

RUSSELL ROOM POINSETTIAS

The red poinsettias on the table are given in loving memory of Frank High by Bobbie Heron.

GREETERS AND USHERS

The greeters today are Carl Condra and Robyn Deaton. The ushers are Susan Langley, Lori Gale, Karl Newlin, John Oates and Grace Thomas.

AN INVITATION

Coffee and tea will be served in the Russell Room following the service. Members and friends are invited to share in these moments of warmth made possible for us today by Stacey Staaterman, Margaret Brown, Wendy Cooper, Sara Gill, Jaya Melwani, Alexis Roosa and Nique Roosa.

CHURCH SCHOOL AND NURSERY CARE

Sessions of Church School for children are offered Sunday mornings from ten-thirty to twelve. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is available on the fourth floor.