



THIRD WEEK  
OF  
*Advent*

## Deck the Halls for the Coming of Christ

Haven Lutheran Church

December 18, 2020

A Pause in God's Word in Our Hope and Expectation

*"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation."*  
*Isaiah 61: 10*

**Prayer:** (p.45) Clothe me in your garments of salvation,  
merciful God, so daily I rejoice in you. **Amen.**

ADVENT-URE WORDS FOR TODAY: **EXALT** AND **EXULT** (*exult* is not on the official list, but it appears in the reading above). These two words sound alike and except for a vowel are spelled alike; they both have Latin roots, but the roots have different meanings. **Exalt** means to lift up (think of *alt* in the English word *altitude*), as in the familiar Advent verse, popularized by the chorus in Handel's *Messiah*, *Every valley shall be exalted* (Isaiah 40:4 - NRSV translates literally as *lifted up*). Jesus' exaltation ironically is to be lifted up on a cross, but then literally to be lifted up in glory (Philippians 2:9). **Exult** means to leap for joy, but more generally denotes being glad or rejoicing, as in the Isaiah 61 verse above. In the NRSV, the Bible version we use for our worship readings, *exult* occurs many times in the Old Testament (especially, as you might guess, in Psalms), but only once in the New Testament in Revelation 19:7. The Greek word that's translated *exult* in that verse is, however, fairly common, but is usually rendered *rejoice* or *be glad*. So maybe this helps clarify the difference in those two similar looking and sounding verbs! Psalm 89:15-19 uses both words within a very short passage where it's easy to catch the separate meanings.

Now let's go back to the literal meaning of *exult*, to leap for joy, because that event occurs in our Advent Gospel readings. Zechariah and Elizabeth were way too old to do much leaping; Mary was more reflective; and while Joseph initially leaped, it wasn't for joy, it was to the wrong conclusion! So who leaped for joy? Remember when Mary visited Elizabeth after she heard that her older relative was also pregnant? *As soon as I heard the sound of your greeting*, exclaimed Elizabeth to Mary, *the child in my womb leaped for joy*. Already before he was born, John the Baptist was joyfully fulfilling his mission of pointing the way (with his feet!) to Jesus. In fact, the angel Gabriel had proclaimed to Zechariah, John's disbelieving father-to-be, a few months before: *even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit* (Luke 1:15, 44 – these verses also affirm the consistent biblical perspective that unborn children from the time of conception are in relationship to God, and their lives from that point are precious in his sight). Elizabeth's wonderful announcement led Mary to burst forth in the song that we know as the Magnificat, in which she praised God for lifting up the lowly (KJV, RSV – *exalted those of low degree*).

But there's another story of leaping and praising that Luke shares later on - after Jesus' death, resurrection and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. In Acts 3 Peter and John on their way to the Temple for afternoon prayer encountered a lame beggar at the gate. Perhaps you recall the old Sunday School song about that incident where Peter announced to the beggar: *Silver and gold have I none, But such as I have I give you, In the name of*

*Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.* In the story Peter actually took the beggar by the hand and raised him up. And the refrain of the song, echoing the last part of verse 8 continues: *He went walking and leaping and praising God* - exalted so that he could exult in God's mercy and healing!

These words and that story just may speak to us this season. Our Lord Jesus, exalted above the heavens, lovingly abandoned his exaltation to become one of us of low degree. So whatever has us presently down – COVID fatigue, no family celebration, loss of a loved one or a friend, division in our nation, loneliness in our heart, fear of an uncertain future – Jesus sinks to our level, takes us by the hand and lifts us up so that once more we can walk and leap and sing praise to God, for to us is born this day a Savior who is Christ the Lord! And there in that manger, on the cross, at the empty tomb, in the story, through the meal, he exalts us so that we can exult in his goodness even on this strange Christmas!

In the midst of all obstacles that would get in the way, be blessed by this Savior with a joyous Christmas and a hope filled New Year.

*Pastor David Kaplan*

#### A POEM OF EXULTING

##### "Sharon's Prayer"

She was five,

sure of the facts,  
and recited them  
with slow solemnity,  
convinced every word  
was revelation.  
She said

they were so poor  
they had only peanut butter  
and jelly sandwiches to eat  
and they went a long way from home  
without getting lost. The lady rode  
a donkey, the man walked, and the baby  
was inside the lady.  
They had to stay in a stable  
with an ox and an ass (hee-hee)  
but the Three Rich Men found them  
because a star lit the roof.  
Shepherds came and you could  
pet the sheep but not feed them.  
Then the baby was born.  
And do you know who he was?

Her quarter eyes inflated  
to silver dollars.

The baby was God.

And she jumped in the air  
whirled round, dove into the sofa

and buried her head under the cushion  
which is the only proper response  
to the Good News of the Incarnation.

by John Shea, *The Hour of the Unexpected*, Allan, Texas, Argus Communications, 1977

### PASTOR KAPLAN'S MUSIC SELECTIONS

Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding! (ELW 246)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCrEt11-SFU>

There's a Voice in the Wilderness (ELW 255)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWO\\_f4Ra-hk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWO_f4Ra-hk)

Fling Wide the Door (ELW 259)

(Instrumental) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-dsYaLRis>

(choir) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eopKn8rkdY>

### MUSIC SUGGESTIONS FROM HAVEN MEMBERS

"Angels We Have Heard on High" (video & music)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=v5mdybeyLVc>

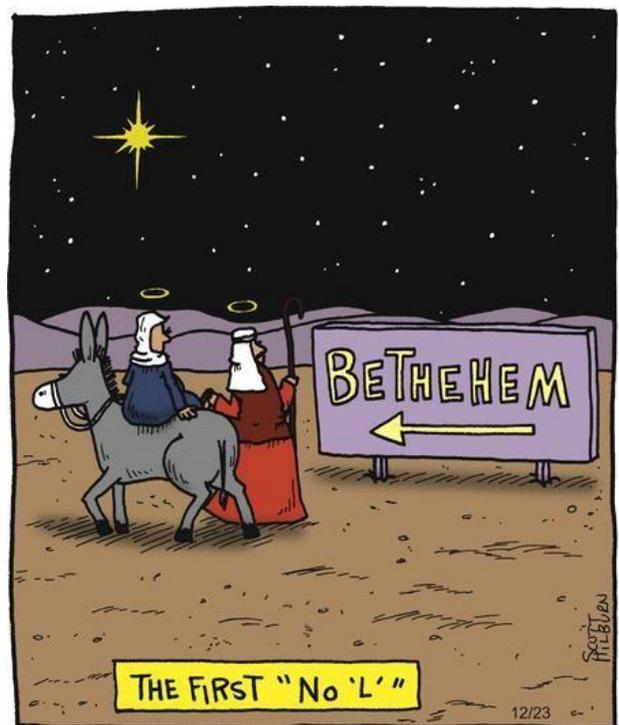
"A Christmas Offering" from Music Gettysburg

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wP1kovdM9Y4&feature=youtu.be>

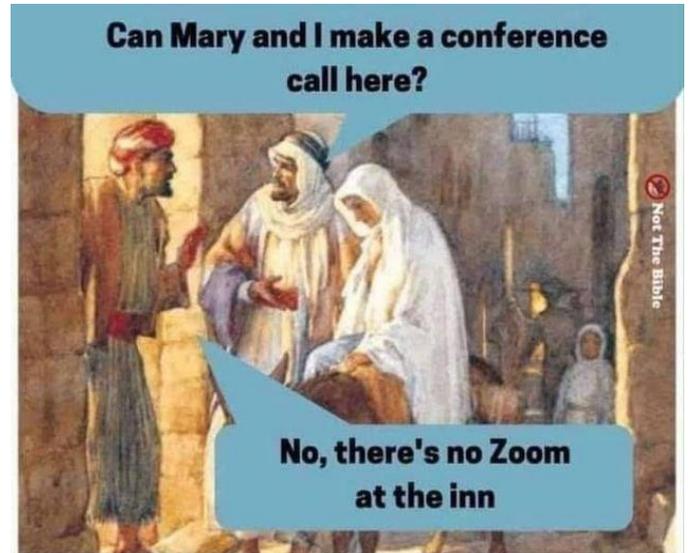
IF YOU ARE A MICHAEL W. SMITH FAN THERE'S A VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT  
SPONSORED BY THRIVENT <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyU3tUf9ukA>

### MONDAY & TUESDAY ADVENT-URE WORDS: WELCOME & TRAVEL

BECAUSE WE NEED TO LAUGH



When you run out of camels for the church's Christmas play.

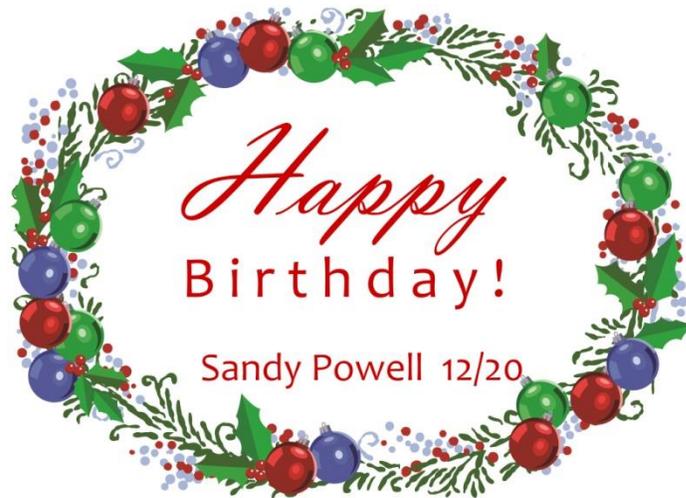


SNOW DAY!



Ethan Rhodes





CAR-OLING THIS SUNDAY, 4:30 PM HAVEN'S PARKING LOT We'll have songbooks and a battery-votive for each one who attends. You bring your voice & Christmas spirit and sit in the warmth of your car with your FM dial turned to FM 106.5. Time to get out for some safe, Christmas joy!

FOR CHRISTMAS EVE AND EPIPHANY SUNDAY LIVESTREAM WORSHIP BAGS WILL BE READY THIS SUNDAY Thanks to all who emailed or called the office for a worship bag for Christmas Eve. With some steady, determined effort, we will also be able to add the bulletins and communion sets for the Epiphany service on January 3rd.

2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES We have offering envelopes that will be available for pickup during worship this Sunday. Please ask an usher to get them for you. If you have asked for a Worship Bag your envelopes will be in the bag with your candle, communion and bulletins. We were short some of our monthly envelopes. We have contacted the company and they are to have additional envelopes to us by the end of January. We will get those ready for pickup as soon as they arrive. We apologize for the inconvenience this may cause.