



Seventh & James Baptist Church
December 31, 2023 · 11:00 a.m.
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Chiming of the Hour

Meditation

“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

(DIVINUM MYSTERIUM)
Wilbur Held

Welcome and Call to Worship

Matt Rosencrans

One: Beloved child of God, you are welcome here....

Many: We give thanks to God for bringing us into this moment of worship.

One: For no matter who you are or where you’ve been, you matter to God and to us.

Many: Our hearts rejoice and give thanks for all those who have come before us and made a place for us to worship, pray, sing, wonder, doubt, believe, and just be.

One: May the love of God through Christ our Lord convince you of your worth and invitation into this body of believers as we worship together in thanksgiving and hope.

Processional Hymn, No. 122

“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”

Litany of Vision

Matt Rosencrans

One: Lord, as we gather here this morning we give thanks for your presence among us, for the blessing of this sanctuary and the way we can see you all around: in the beauty of the artistry all around and in the presence of our sisters and brothers gathered by faith to worship.

Many: Open our eyes that we may see...

One: We are also aware of the great darkness within and without that can cloud out our ability to see you and to see others. We know the strength of despair, prejudice, and fear to cover our eyes and rob us of the gift of Light. For all of us there are scales and logs of various names blocking our sight and blinding us to your presence.

Many: Open our hearts that we may feel...

One: There are certainly times when we see a neighbor that we had not seen before. We feel the weight of love pressing against our comfort, squeezing out our selfishness, and inviting our hands to reach out in love, but we may not be ready to touch, and bless, and feel.

All: Open our hands that they may bless. We know we are your children, created and commanded to love you and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Help us to see, help us to feel, help us to bless not in our own strength, but in your love, by your grace and in Jesus name.

Prayer of Thanksgiving Matt Rosencrans

Old Testament Reading *Isaiah 61:10-62:3* Ellen Deaver

Epistle Reading *Galatians 4:4-7* Ray Deaver

Hymn, No. 131 “In the Bleak Midwinter”

Gospel Reading *Luke 2:22-40* Scott Turner

One: This is the Word of the Lord.
Many: Thanks be to God.

Prayers of God’s People Scott Turner

Offertory “Ding Dong! Merrily on High!” arr. Molly Ijames
Ann Shoemaker, *bassoon*

During the offertory, we invite you to prayerfully consider your stewardship of all the resources God is entrusting to you. The work of God at Seventh & James is dependent on the financial generosity and volunteer service of its members and friends. Offering plates are available at the doors of the sanctuary as you leave worship. Join us as you respond to God’s call.

Doxology

(Sung to Veni Emmanuel, tune of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;

Praise God, above ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Children's Sermon

Paula Hoover

*All children are invited to come forward for the Children's Sermon.
Preschoolers [ages 4-kindergarten] may then go to Extended Session.*

Responsive Reading of Psalm 148

Erin Conaway

One: Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

Many: Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

One: Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!

Many: Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

One: Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.

Many: He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

One: Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,

Many: Fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!

One: Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!

Many: Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!

One: Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

Many: Young men and women alike, old and young together!

One: Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven.

All: He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the Lord!

Meditation

“Trios pieces, Op. 34: No. 2, Andante moderato”

Charles Koechlin

Ann Shoemaker, *bassoon*

Sermon

“Do You See What I See?”

Erin Conaway

(Luke 2:22-40)

Silent Reflection

Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it, because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.

— Frederick Buechner

Hymn of Commitment, No. 143

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

*If you would like to make a public profession of your faith in Christ
or request membership in this congregation, our ministers
will greet you at the front of the sanctuary.*

Congregational Response

In response to your decision, we pledge ourselves to be the family of God for you in this place; we offer you our love, our care, our kinship, and our hopes; we hope to learn from you, give to you, and receive from you, by God’s grace. Amen.

Pastoral Blessing

Erin Conaway

Postlude

“God Rest You Merry”

Wilbur Held

Today at Seventh

Our Guest Conductor today is Tommy Edds.

The Sanctuary Flowers are given by Kay & David Pennington in gratitude for the Seventh Family.

Hearing devices are available at the sound booth for any who need assistance.

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