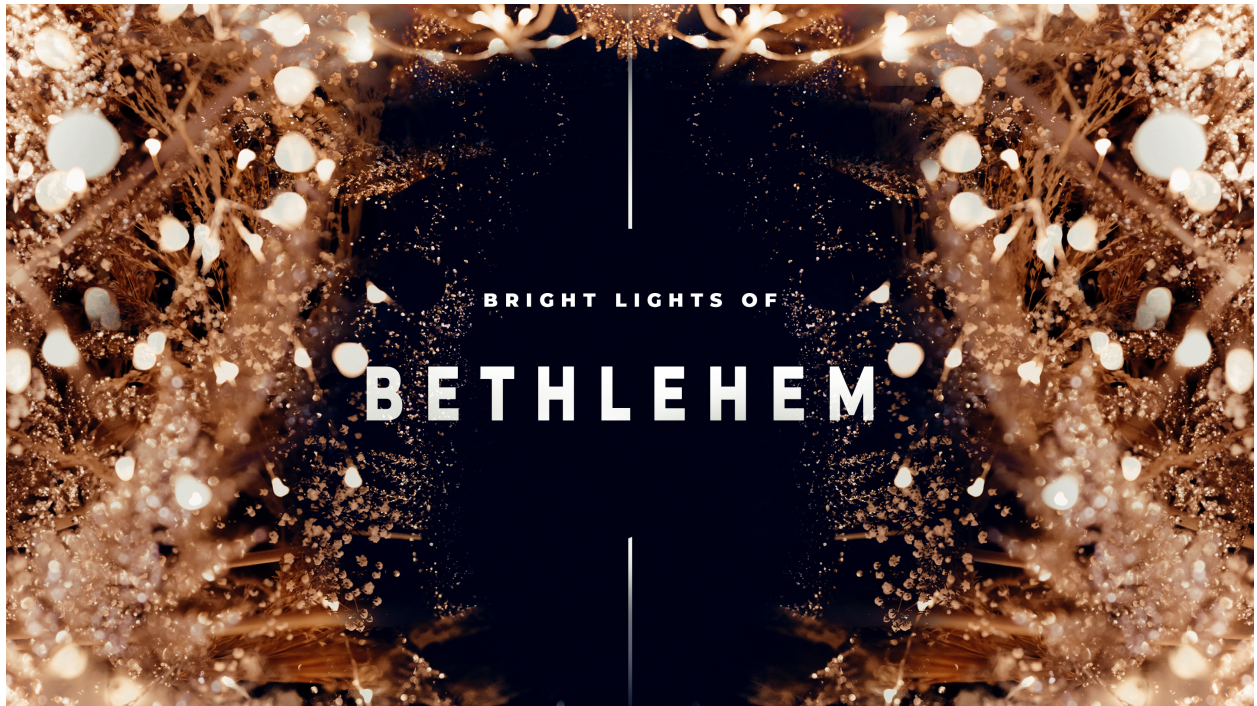


**Sunday, December 17, 2023, 11:15am**  
**Third Sunday In Advent**  
*Bright Light of Bethlehem...A Special Purpose Light*



*Advent means 'coming'.*

*This sacred Season is for the purpose of Jesus coming to us and coming for us.*

*As we count down the days until Christmas, our hearts are getting ready to celebrate Jesus' initial arrival, His first advent, when He entered into our world as the Babe of Bethlehem.*

*At the same time, we prepare our hearts for His second advent, His final coming, when He will return to earth to judge both the living and the dead and to give eternal life to all who believe in Him.*

*Our Readings for today remind us of the special ministry of John the Baptist, who came as a witness to Jesus, the light of the world. John was not the light, nor was he the centerpiece of God's plan to save the world. No, John's life was dedicated to preparing the way before the Lord and to get people ready for Jesus coming to save us.*

*In many ways, we are invited to be like John...to trust in Jesus, our Savior and King, and then let the world know He is coming to the rescue of His people.*

### **Opening Song of Praise**

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

P: I waited patiently for the Lord,

**C: He inclined to me and heard my cry.**

P: He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog,

**C: and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.**

P: He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

**C: Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.**

P: That we may rejoice in the great things our forgiving God does for us, let us confess our sins before Him.

**C: Most merciful God, I confess that I have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what I do and by what I fail to do.**

**Instead of looking to Jesus and following Him in faith, I have gone astray by disobeying Your Word. Instead of giving bold witness to**

**You, I have kept silent and withheld Your grace from others. For the sake of my Savior and King, have mercy on me. Forgive me and restore me. Guide me and renew me. Help me to walk in Your ways to the glory of Your Holy name. Amen.**

P: Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus. He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it. Our faithful God hears our prayers and answers them, removing our sins from us and declaring us blameless in His sight through faith in Jesus. As a called and ordained servant of Jesus, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Together, we pray,

**C: Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers. Strengthen our witness to the true light that overcomes our darkness; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, Amen.**

## **Children's Time**

### **Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11**

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Romans 1:1-7 [Sermon Text]**

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the first chapter.

**C: Glory to You, O Lord.**

### **(John 1:6-8, 19-28)**

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to You, O Christ.**

P: We profess our faith

**C: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.**

**And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

### *Sermon Praise Song*

**The Sermon**                    *A Special Purpose Light*

**The Gathering of our Gifts and Tithes**

**The Prayers of His Children**

P: Lord, in Your mercy,    **C: Hear our prayer.**

P: ...who taught us to pray,

**C: 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 and ever. Amen.**

**P: The Lord be with you.**

**C: And also with you.**

**P: Lift up your hearts.**

**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

**P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.**

**C: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

**The Words of our Lord**

**The Distribution of Holy Communion**

**P: Let us pray.**

**C: Gracious Lord, Your Word says to us: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” We joyfully give You thanks for the blessings offered to us in the body and blood of our Savior. May we go forth to witness to others of the wonders He has done! We pray in the name of our coming King, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

**God’s Benediction**

***Sending Praise Song***

**Ministry Announcements**