



## **Third Sunday in Advent** **Sunday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

### Theme: What is This Dragon?

This one is strange. A dragon, really? Revelation 12 offers a sweeping cosmic vision: an epic battle straight out of fantasy fiction. A fierce dragon with all the trappings of power is locked in a deathmatch with, get this, a pregnant woman whose child is (somehow) the greatest threat to this dragon's dominion. This seems unfair—like a crazy imbalance of power. And it is. But not in the direction we expect. The birth of the child is where the real power resides. This pregnancy and birth are the decisive blow in the battle. In fact, this birth so wounds radical evil that God's victory is assured. Wait, what child is this?

## **Call to Worship**

P: Blessed be the Holy Trinity, + one God, in whose image we are made, who claims us and calls us beloved.

**C: Amen**

## **CANDLE-LIGHTING (Donna & David Hansen)**

Leader: God of grace: Return us to one another. To the broken, give wholeness. To the mourning, give strength for dancing. To the grieving, give solace.

**All: Fill us with your hope and be near us now.**

L: May your eternal love spring forth from the pain and uncertainty of the world.

**All: Fill us with your peace and release our grip of control and fear.**

L: Lighten our hearts, clear our minds, burn away all that does not bring life to your people and your whole creation.

**All: Fill us with your joy and nourish us to bear good fruit in the world.**

L: Renew our hearts in you, and help us look again to the day of restoration.

**All: Fill us with your love and prepare us to welcome you.**

L: O Christ who was and is and ever shall be:

**All: Light the fire of hope in our hearts, open us to your call to peace, ground us in your love. Amen**

## Just The Start

*Advent Candle Song*

Crary

Light of Life, show us the way. Burn-ing fire turns night to day.  
Make a home in chill-y hearts. Your thrill of hope is  
just the start. Give us hope when you are near. — Bring us  
peace, re-lease the fear. — Spring up joy through - out the earth.  
Your qui-et love gives us new birth.

## **CALL TO CONFESSION**

Fear can be a good thing. It can help us be attentive while driving down the highway. It can alert us to possible accidents. It can motivate us to do our best. However, fear can also be harmful. For so many of us, fear of the other, fear of failure, or fear of the unknown has led us to make sinful choices in our lives—choices such as building walls or tearing others down. Today, in confession, we ask for mercy and pray for guidance. As we confess, we come before an entirely merciful and loving God who says to us, “Do not be afraid.” Let us pray:

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Patient God, you know just how often we make decisions from a place of fear rather than love. You know just how often we allow fear to take the place of logic, fanning unhealthy fires in our lives. You know just how often we tuck your words, “Do not be afraid” on dusty shelves and in the back of closets, stubbornly holding onto our own point of view. Forgive us for giving fear the microphone. Silence the voices of scarcity, shame, and rejection, which spark and feed so much of our fear, to recenter us in love. With hope we pray, amen.**

## **WORDS OF FORGIVENESS**

P: Family of faith, even when we forget God’s words, God does not forget us. Even when we lose our way, God does not lose us. Even when we fall short or make mistakes, God forgives and holds onto us. We are known, forgiven, and loved. **C: Thanks be to God! Amen.**

## **GATHERING HYMN**

He Came Down

ELW #253

## **GREETING**

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **C: And also with you.**

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

L: Stir up our hearts in joy, O God.

**All: Teach us the cycles of repentance, forgiveness, liberation, and change. Clear away that which does not give life to the world, so that we may live as your people, one Body of Christ. Through Jesus Christ, our joy and salvation. Amen.**

## **READING**

### **Revelation 12:1-17**

A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup> She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. <sup>3</sup> Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems on his heads. <sup>4</sup> His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to deliver a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. <sup>5</sup> And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a scepter of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne, <sup>6</sup> and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days. <sup>7</sup> And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his

angels fought back, <sup>8</sup> but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup> The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. <sup>10</sup> Then I heard a loud voice in heaven proclaiming, “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. <sup>11</sup> But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice then, you heavens and those who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath because he knows that his time is short!” <sup>13</sup> So when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had delivered the male child. <sup>14</sup> But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. <sup>15</sup> Then from his mouth the serpent poured water like a river after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood. <sup>16</sup> But the earth came to the help of the woman; it opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. <sup>17</sup> Then the dragon was angry with the woman and went off to wage war on the rest of her children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.

P: The word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

## MESSAGE

## OFFERING

**Ways To Give Offering: In Person, Venmo and Online [www.galutheranchurch.org](http://www.galutheranchurch.org)**



*Because you give...*  
*we worship, fellowship, learn, serve and grow.*  
***Thank you for your generosity!***

## OFFERING SONG

# What We Offer

*Song for Setting the Table*

Crary

The musical score is written on five staves in a 2/2 time signature. The lyrics are: "O - pen our lives to the needs of our neigh - bors. Dare us to shoul - der the bur - dens of strang - ers. We give up these gifts to let go — of our lives. Take what we of - fer as our liv - ing sac - ri - fice. Take what we of - fer as our liv - ing sac - ri - fice." The melody is simple and uses a mix of quarter and eighth notes.

## OFFERING PRAYER

L: God of hope,

**All: you fill the hungry with good things. Give us hopeful hearts and open hands to receive your love and share our abundance, that all may be fed. In the name of the one who sustains all life, Jesus Christ, our love. Amen.**

## EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

L: Holy God, the one who was and is and is to come,

**All: we praise you, we bless you, we thank you for your presence among us in your Son Jesus, the bringer of peace.**

L: Holy God, the one who was and is and is to come,

**All: Hear us when we cry. Make all things new. Heal the nations. Widen and deepen the imagination of our hearts. Give us rest in you.**

L: In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

**All: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.**

L: Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

**All: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.**

L: Place in our hearts the thrill of hope, O God, you who are Alpha and Omega, beginning and end,  
**All: that we may all know your restoration and love in this world and the next, now and forever.**  
**Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER**

**INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God, who has come to save you.

**COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION**

(All Are Welcome to Receive Communion Here at GA Church)

**POST COMMUNION BLESSING**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

L: Holy one,

**All: you have blessed us with your very self. Make us one body in you, living into the mystery of your goodness and mercy, now and forever. Amen.**

**CHRISTMAS PROGRAM: “Once Upon A Manger: A Paper Bag Pageant”** by Tracey Wells

\*The congregation is invited to sing along with the Hymns as posted on the screens.

**BLESSING**

May the God of hope guide you, May the way of peace sustain you, May the warmth of joy gather you, In the name of the one who creates, redeems, and sustains us. Amen.

**DISMISSAL**

L: Go in peace, live in hope

**All: and share the Good News of God’s Word and serve the community and the world.**

**Thanks be to God.**

Mission Statement of Gustaf Adolf Lutheran Church (Adopted in 2022)

**To share the Good News of God’s Word and to serve the community and the world.**

*Matthew 22:39* ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

*Matthew 28:19* Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

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We celebrate weekly Holy Communion. We welcome all who believe in the Risen Christ and who find in the sacrament our Lord’s real presence for the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of life. If you receive communion in your home congregation, you are invited to receive it here at G.A. Red wine and white grape juice will be offered to you in Christ’s name. You may choose your preference. If you are unable to receive wheat bread, or wine, be sure that in a single element you receive the Presence and all the gifts of the sacrament. *From Sundays and Seasons.com. Copyright 2024 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted and live streamed by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #35904. CCLI# 3138595 and #21256999*

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A Thrill of Hope: Advent in a Box Volume 2 Written by: Nate Cray & Rev. Miriam Samuelson Roberts  
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*Liturgy adapted from a prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org*

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