

## Sermon followed by Service

December 31, 2023

Isaiah 40:12

Have you ever felt too tired for New year's Eve? I know I have. With New Year's Eve, we have one of the busiest times of the year, Christmas, crashing into one of the hardest deadlines of the year - the end of the year. Put the busiest time of the year together with the hardest deadline of the year - and this time of year can be incredibly exhausting.

But Isaiah's people didn't have Christmas trees and lights and shopping to worry about. And we don't hear anything of New Year's Eve for Isaiah and his people. So why were Isaiah's people so tired? Part of the answer could be: "Maybe they weren't." Our lesson isn't just medicine for the tired; our lesson is vaccine for people who were about to be tired. It's not just a power supply for those short of power today; it's power supply for those who will some day in the future need new power. So even if you're feeling fully powered-up today, this lesson is for you.

Now why was Isaiah giving his people a new power supply? Isaiah knew, God knew, his people were about to feel powerless. Powerless - like when you're slipping on ice and there's nothing you can do. Powerless - like that feeling when you're being held down and beaten and there's nothing you can do. Powerless - beaten down. Powerless - worn out. The Babylonians were coming and they were going to beat Judah down; they would beat her down into dust. And Isaiah's people

would be powerless to fight back; powerless to escape; hopeless, helpless, and worn out. The time was coming when they would need to be re-energized.

When do you need to be re-energized? It's not just Christmas-time and New Year's Eve, is it? So what is it that makes you feel powerless, beaten down? Sometimes it's sickness; or the way age catches up with us and beats our body down - illness and age can be so frustrating, scary, depressing; they can suck the energy out of us. Or it might be watching someone we love sick, hurting, in trouble, and there's nothing we can do about it - and that sucks the energy out of us. Or maybe it's a to-do list that just gets longer and longer and so much never gets done - and that sucks the life out of us.

Other times - who is it, what is the Babylon that beats you down? Someone, something at work? At home? We might wonder "who's going to bully us next? Who's going to lie to us next? Who's going to cheat us next?" Maybe it's the news we watch, some gossip we hear; maybe it's the complaining we feed on. Sometimes it seems we're living on the edge of perdition and we're about to be swallowed up by all the evil out there. Sometimes we might feel like we're living on the edge of damnation with all the guilt and shame and failure we work in here [our hearts], with all the guilt, the shame, the failure we bottle up in here [our hearts]. I said: "living on the edge of perdition and damnation," but it feels more like dying on the edge of perdition and damnation - doesn't it? - because it sucks the life right out of us.

Sometimes, living on the edge of perdition and damnation - worn down and worn out, we might throw up our hands: “Whatever! If they don’t care, why should I care? If God doesn’t care, why should I care?” Or we might feel too tired, too worn out to throw up our hands, and all we can do is sigh: **“My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God. My God doesn’t care any more.”**

When we’re feeling tapped out like that, a pot of coffee won’t give us the energy we need ... turning up the volume on the music won’t do it either, will it? So where can we tap in for new power? **<sup>28</sup>Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. <sup>29</sup>He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. <sup>30</sup>Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; <sup>31</sup>but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.**

Have you seen how eagles soar? Wouldn’t it be great to have energy like that? But eagles don’t soar on their own power, do they? They ride the winds. And we don’t have to rely on or ride on our own power. **“Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.”** Or a better translation: **“Those who wait for the LORD will receive new strength.”** Here’s the idea - “Those who wait, those who are looking, looking, looking for the LORD will exchange their strength.” Looking to the LORD, we

get to trade in our old worn out strength for new re-energized power.

How? Well, sometimes why do we get tapped out? We look at all that's going on in our life and we think we have to carry it all. Look to the LORD and check out his hands - v12 - **“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?”** Instead of us trying to carry everything, what do we get to do? Let God carry it!

What tires us out? Sometimes it might seem like most all the world is against us. Look to the LORD; check out v15 - **“Surely the nations [everybody and everything that's against you] are like a drop in a bucket ... as dust on the scales....<sup>17</sup> Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.** It doesn't matter who is against us; it doesn't matter how many are against us - to your God, they're nothing - nothing he can't handle!

What tires us out? Sometimes we might think we have to hold our world together. Check out where God is - <sup>21</sup> **Do you not know? Have you not heard? ...<sup>22</sup> He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.<sup>23</sup> He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. Listen to him:<sup>25</sup> “To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?”** says

**the Holy One. <sup>26</sup> Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”** When we think we have to hold it all together, when we can’t hold it all together, stare up into the stars. Your God is up there ruling over all. He knows every star up there by name and he knows every one of you by name. He holds every one of those stars in its place and he holds every one of you in his heart. We don’t have to think it’s up to us to hold our world together and make every thing right. Instead of thinking about how much I can carry; we get to think about how much God can carry. It’s not the size and number of our enemies or our problems that matter; it’s the size and power of our God.

And he has what it takes. Check out v28 - **“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.”**

There’s times I think: “That’s all good and fine for God, but I’m tired.” Well, Isaiah isn’t just showing us God’s power and God’s energy just so that we “wow” at God. Isaiah is showing us God’s power and energy so that we put aside our own power and strength, so that we look to the LORD, not just to renew our power and strength, but we look to the LORD to exchange his power and strength in place of our power and strength.

And then what? **“Those who look to the LORD will receive new strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”** Look to the LORD and his strength will be your strength. Amen.

December 31, 2023

## DIVINE SERVICE I

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** we are coming to the end of an old year and about to enter into a new year. Some are tired of the old year and look forward with the empty hope that the change of a calendar will mean that life will someone be different and better for them.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we find that we don't have to put our hopes on the silly notion that a change of the calendar will mean a new life. Instead of an empty hope, we get to find strength and new life in the LORD who holds the world and promises to carry us!

### OPENING HYMN

*"Now Sing We, Now Rejoice"*

**Hymn 363**

Now sing we, now rejoice, now raise to heav'n our voice;  
he from whom joy streameth poor in a manger lies;  
not so brightly beameth the sun in yonder skies.  
Thou my Savior art! Thou my Savior art!

Come from on high to me; I cannot rise to thee.  
Cheer my wearied spirit, O pure and holy Child;  
thro' thy grace and merit, blest Jesus, Lord most mild,  
draw me unto thee! Draw me unto thee!

Now through his Son doth shine the Father's grace divine.  
Death was reigning o'er us through sin and vanity  
till he opened for us a bright eternity.  
May we praise him there! May we praise him there!

Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav'nly ground,  
where the angels singing with all his saints unite,  
sweetest praises bringing in heav'nly joy and light.  
Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!

## INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### + CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION +

M: We confess our sins and ask for forgiveness.

Almighty Lord God, we have gathered today to thank you for the gift of your Son, our Savior. We need a Savior, for we have sinned greatly against you. But your mercies never end; they are new to us every day. So at your command and promise, we ask you to forgive us.

**C: O holy and most merciful Father, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: God, have mercy on me a sinner!**

M: I bring you good news of great joy! A Savior has been born for you! Jesus has destroyed the work of the devil; he has set you free to live with God. He has done what we couldn't do - he has made us right with God! Through Jesus you are forgiven and saved to be God's child. Glory to God in the highest!

**C: Amen.**

### + PRAYER AND PRAISE +

M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

## GLORY TO GOD *Glory in Excelsis (Sung)*

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory! Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer, receive our prayer. Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.



For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Glory to God, glory to God!

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, in mercy you sent your one and only Son to take upon himself our human nature. By his gracious coming, deliver us from the corruption of our sin, and transform us into the likeness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

#### FIRST READING

*Galatians 4:4–7*

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### HYMN

*“All My Heart Again Rejoices”*

**Hymn 329**

All my heart again rejoices as I hear far and near sweetest angel voices.  
“Christ is born!” their choirs are singing till the air ev’rywhere  
now with joy is ringing.

Hear! The conqueror has spoken: “Now the foe, sin and woe,  
death and hell are broken!”

God is man, man to deliver, and the Son now is one  
with our blood forever.

Should we fear our God's displeasure, who, to save, freely gave  
his most precious treasure?  
To redeem us he has given his own Son from the throne  
of his might in heaven.

See the Lamb, our sin once taking to the cross, suff'ring loss,  
full atonement making.  
For our life his own he tenders, and his grace all our race  
fit for glory renders.

Softly from his lowly manger Jesus calls one and all,  
"You are safe from danger.  
Children, from the sins that grieve you you are freed; all you need  
I will surely give you."

Come, then, banish all your sadness! One and all, great and small,  
come with songs of gladness;  
we shall live with him forever there on high in that joy  
which will vanish never.

#### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared  
in the sight of all nations. Alleluia.

#### **GOSPEL**

*Luke 2:22–40*

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.  
For my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and the glory of your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

#### NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father.**

**Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

*"Let All Together Praise Our God"*

**Hymn 355**

Let all together praise our God before his highest throne;  
today he opens heav'n again and gives us his own Son,  
and gives us his own Son.

He leaves his heav'nly Father's throne, is born an infant small,  
and in a manger, poor and lone, lies in a humble stall, lies in a humble stall.

He veils in flesh his pow'r divine a servant's form to take,  
in want and lowliness must pine who heav'n and earth did make,  
who heav'n and earth did make.

He undertakes a great exchange, puts on our human frame,  
and in return gives us his realm, his glory, and his name,  
his glory, and his name.

He serves that I a lord may be — a great exchange indeed!  
Could Jesus' love do more for me to help me in my need,  
to help me in my need?

For us he opens wide the door of paradise today.  
The angel guards the gate no more; to God our thanks we pay,  
to God our thanks we pay.

**SERMON**

*Isaiah 40:12–31*

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,  
or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?

Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket,  
or weighed the mountains on the scales  
and the hills in a balance?

Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD,  
or instruct the LORD as his counselor?

Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him,  
and who taught him the right way?

Who was it that taught him knowledge,  
or showed him the path of understanding?

Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket;  
they are regarded as dust on the scales;  
he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires,  
nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.

Before him all the nations are as nothing;  
they are regarded by him as worthless  
and less than nothing.

With whom, then, will you compare God?  
To what image will you liken him?

As for an idol, a metalworker casts it,  
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold  
and fashions silver chains for it.

A person too poor to present such an offering  
selects wood that will not rot;  
they look for a skilled worker  
to set up an idol that will not topple.

Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood since the earth was founded?  
He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,  
and its people are like grasshoppers.  
He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,  
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.  
He brings princes to naught  
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.  
No sooner are they planted,  
no sooner are they sown,  
no sooner do they take root in the ground,  
than he blows on them and they wither,  
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.  
“To whom will you compare me?  
Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.  
Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:  
Who created all these?  
He who brings out the starry host one by one  
and calls forth each of them by name.  
Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
not one of them is missing.  
Why do you complain, Jacob?  
Why do you say, Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the LORD;  
my cause is disregarded by my God”?  
Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;  
but those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

### CREATE IN ME (SUNG)

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold, uphold me with your  
free Spirit.

### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Eternal Lord God, in the fullness of time, You sent forth Your Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem us and give us the adoption as Your sons and heirs. Hear us, Father, as we call to You in His name. Give us grace to rejoice in Christ's blessed incarnation, and grant us a glad new year. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lead Your Church, Lord, to follow the example of blessed Simeon, that all baptized Christians would embrace the Christ Child by Word and faith, and so be ready to depart whenever they are called. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, from whom all fatherhood on earth is named, bless Christian families with Your promises. Give parents diligence and delight in their work, and grant Your favor on all children, that they may grow in strength and wisdom. Bless widows, orphans and broken families also with Your mercy, and give them joy in the redemption You have won for us in Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious Lord, receive our prayers for those who suffer from loneliness. Comfort them with the sure and certain knowledge that You will never forsake them. Give them family and friends within the household of faith with whom they can find loving companionship. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Blessed Lord, help the sick and suffering, especially those who desire our prayers [including \_\_\_\_\_]. Surround them with Your love in Christ and, according to Your gracious will, heal them. Comfort those who mourn, [especially \_\_\_\_\_,] and fill their hearts with the certain hope of the resurrection. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father of lasting peace, show Your mercy to those who receive the Lord's Supper this day, that they would behold their salvation in the very body and blood of Christ given for them and, with St. Simeon, be well-prepared to depart in peace according to Your Word. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

#### THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

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



M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, for in the wonder and mystery of his birth you have opened our eyes to the glory of your grace and renewed in our hearts the fervor of your love. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

### **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (SUNG)**

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power, God of might:  
heav'n and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest.

### **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my (+) body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my (+) blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **Amen.**

### **O CHRIST, LAMB OF GOD (SUGN)**

O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;  
have mercy on us.

O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;  
have mercy on us.

O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;  
grant us your peace. Amen. Amen.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

*“As Angels Joyed with One Accord”*

Hymn 320

As angels joyed with one accord upon the advent of our Lord,  
so let us gladly praise the name of him who from the Father came.

He came, not clothed in majesty nor pow’r that suits his deity.  
In lowly state he walked till he in dying set us captives free.

This done, he soared to God’s right hand,  
yet orphaned not his chosen band,  
for he, not bound in grace and pow’r, attends his own each day and hour.

In ev’ry age—let praise abound— he comes; we hear his voice resound.  
His glorious gospel does not cease to bring us comfort, joy, and peace.

He comes in water to the child and cleanses it, from birth defiled.  
This washing seals his pard’ning grace and shows the Father’s kindly face.

He comes to us in bread and wine to give himself and gifts divine.  
O praise him for this sacrament, redeeming love’s great testament!

Lift up your heads! All grief and pain shall vanish when he comes again.  
Where we shall see him face to face, there joy alone shall have a place.

CLOSING PRAYER

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.  
**and his mercy endures forever.**

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
**we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.**

We give thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us with this Holy Supper. We pray that through it you will strengthen our faith in you and increase our love for one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

## CLOSING HYMN

*“O Rejoice, All Christians Loudly”*

**Hymn 366**

O rejoice, all Christians, loudly, for our joy has now begun;  
wondrous things our God has done. Tell abroad his goodness proudly,  
who our race has honored thus, that he has befriended us.

### *Refrain*

Joy, O joy, beyond all gladness! Christ has done away with sadness!  
Hence, all sorrow and repining, for the Sun of grace is shining!

See, my soul, your Savior chooses poverty and weakness, too;  
in such love he comes to you. Neither crib nor cross refuses,  
all he suffers for your good to redeem you by his blood. *Refrain*

Lord, how shall I thank you rightly? I am saved eternally  
by your life and death for me. Let me not forget it lightly,  
but with all my heart believe that from you I shall receive. *Refrain*

Jesus, guard and guide your members, fill them with your boundless grace,  
hear their prayers in ev'ry place. Fan to life faith's glowing embers;  
grant all Christians far and near holy peace, a glad new year. *Refrain*

## OFFERING

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