

December 6, 2020

Psalm 118:26-29

²⁶Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Holy One.

We bless you from the house of God.

²⁷The Holy One is God,

and the Holy One has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches,
up to the horns of the altar.

²⁸You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God, I will extol you.

²⁹O give thanks to the Holy One, who is good,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.

This has been an unusual and very difficult year. Given what we have endured to date and the unknown in the near future, it is hard to get ourselves into a festive mood. Hard to imagine a "festal procession", much less one with branches and decorations. At times it is equally hard to give thanks and extol God and God's love. Life for many of us feels more anxiety-filled than loving.

And yet, and yet, I hear people are decorating for Christmas much earlier than usual. It seems we are looking to put the twinkle back into our lives. We are ready for a reason to celebrate. We want a little Christmas joy, after no Easter celebration, no gathering and fireworks for the 4th of July, no backyard, summer-ending, Labor Day barbeque, no candy-gorging Halloween, no large gathering around the table on Thanksgiving. Everyone seems ready to decorate their homes and light up their trees in order to lighten the darkness, both the tragic darkness of 2020 and the seasonal darkness.

In today's worship service, which will continue into next Sunday as well, we begin a traditional decorating of the sanctuary with the symbols of our faith in order to encourage and help you as you decorate. In this service we will "bind the festal procession with branches" and much more. We will do this with appropriate scripture passages and then explanations as to how the symbols we use to decorate with became tradition.

This Sunday we focus on the different decorations that remind us of the season and get us into the spirit of Christmas. Next Sunday our focus will be on the nativity. I hope you will find the words and pictures meaningful for you, as you try – in the midst of this physical distancing pandemic – to find the feelings of hope, peace, joy, and love that are so central to this season, our faith, and our lives.

Let us now bring in the light of this season. Amen.