

**Advent 3, December 13, 2020, Order of Worship**

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

**Call to Worship, Psalm 126** Note: Put yourself in the shoes (sandals) of the Israelites. They had been captive in Babylon, some of them for as long as 70 years, and now the Lord has led them home. ***When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced! Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb (a desert area). May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.***

**Confession and Forgiveness for Advent**

Let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires. *Silent reflection.*

***Loving and forgiving God, we confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.*** (from *Sundays & Seasons*, 2020, Augsburg Fortress, p. 24)

People of God, hear this glad news: by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free—free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God's love, comforted by Christ's peace, and accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Opening Hymn**      ***O Lord, How Shall I Meet You*** (public domain)      LBW 23, ELW241  
Sing to *Lead On, O King Eternal*, or *The Church's One Foundation*

***O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?  
Your people long to greet you, my hope, my heart's delight!  
O kindle, Lord most holy, your lamp within my breast  
To do in spirit lowly all that may please you best.***

***Love caused your incarnation; love brought you down to me.  
Your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.  
Oh, love beyond all telling, that led you to embrace  
In love, all love excelling, our lost and fallen race.***

***Rejoice, then, you sad-hearted, he freed you from your sins;  
You stood, your shame bemoaning, and now new life begins.  
Despair not, he is near you, there, standing at the door,  
Who best can help and cheer you and bids you weep no more.***

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**The Kyrie** In peace, let us pray to the Lord. For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord. For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord. For all these things we pray: Lord, have mercy. Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord. **Amen.**

**Prayer of the Day** Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets so that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**A reading from Isaiah, the 61st chapter (61:1-4, 8-11)** Note: Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon (as in the Psalm), they continued to face hardship and oppression. The prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoner; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.*

**Song based on Isaiah 61:3** *Beauty for Ashes* (CCLI 706169) *Joyful Songbook* #34

*He gave me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning;  
the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;  
That we might be trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord,  
that he might be glorified.*

**Isaiah 61:8-11**

*For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.* Word of God, word of life.

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**A reading from First Thessalonians, the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter (I Thess 5:16-24)** Note: Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.* Word of God, word of life.

**Alleluia** *Alleluia! Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia!*

**The holy Gospel according to John, the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter (1:1-6, 19-28), Sermon** (page 6)

**Hymn of the Day** *On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry* (public domain) LBW 36, ELW 249

*On Jordan's banks the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh;  
Awake and hearken, for he brings glad tidings of the King of kings!*

*Then cleansed be every life from sin; make straight the way for God within,  
And let us all our hearts prepare for Christ to come and enter there.*

*We hail you as our Savior, Lord, our refuge and our great reward;  
Without your grace we waste away like flow'rs that wither and decay.*

*All praise to you eternal Son, whose advent has our freedom won,  
Whom with the Father we adore, and Holy Spirit, evermore.*

**The Apostle's Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

**Prayers** (from *Sundays and Seasons*, ELCA worship guide)

God of power and might, shine your radiance and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

Faithful God, you teach us to wait for you with faithfulness and patience. Sustain and support us in our doubts and questions. Nurture our faith as we discern and enact your mission. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of preachers and messengers, you have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming the good news. Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people who contribute their prayers and talents to public worship. Embed your word in their hearts and lives. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of every living creature, you announce the year of your favor for all of creation. Extend your kindness and relief to endangered animals and plants. Strengthen the human beings who rely on the rhythms of nature to make their living. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of all peoples and nations, you plant us as your oaks of righteousness and ask us to care for one another. Be present with the leaders of every nation as they govern. Give them a spirit of righteousness, that your goodness and mercy may be revealed through their actions. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of exiles and wanderers, you repair what was once destroyed. We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm. Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of the powerful and the helpless, you clothe us with strength when our spirits are weak and weary. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. Make your church a place of refuge and healing for all. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of sinners and saints, you offer joy even in the midst of our grief. We are grateful for the beloved, imperfect people whose lives testified to your radiant love. Anoint all who mourn with the oil of gladness. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying **Our Father . . . .**

**Closing Hymn**

***Prepare the Royal Highway*** (public domain)

LBW 26, ELW 264

***Prepare the royal highway; the King of kings is near!***

***Let ev'ry hill and valley a level road appear!***

***Then greet the King of glory, foretold in sacred story:***

**Refrain: *Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's Word!***

***Then fling the gates wide open to greet your promised king!***

***Your king, yet ev'ry nation its tribute too may bring.***

***All lands will bow before him; their voices join your singing: Refrain***

***His is no earthly kingdom; it comes from heav'n above.***

***His rule is peace and freedom and justice, truth, and love.***

***So let your praise be sounding for kindness so abounding: Refrain***

**Benediction:** The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord look upon you with favor, and give you peace. Amen.