

Worship Plan for Sunday, December 17, 2017

3 Advent

Third Sunday of Advent

ELW Holy Communion Setting One

Sunday, December 17, 2017

Introduction to the day

“Rejoice always,” begins the reading from First Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. “All God’s children got a robe,” go the words of the spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes that make us feel happy just to put on. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, 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.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

The reading may be announced:

A reading from Isaiah.

Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of the Lord, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

¹The 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 prisoners;
²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³to provide for those 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.
⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

⁸For 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.
⁹Their 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.
¹⁰I 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.
¹¹For 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.

The reading may be concluded:

Word of God, word of life.

The assembly responds:

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 126

The LORD has done great things for us. (*Ps. 126:3*)

¹When the LORD restored the for- | tunes of Zion,
then were we like | those who dream.

²**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with |
shouts of joy.**

**Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great |
things for them.”**

³The LORD has done great | things for us,
and we are | glad indeed.

⁴**Restore our for- | tunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses | of the Negeb. R**

⁵Those who | sowed with tears
will reap with | songs of joy.

⁶**Those who go out weeping, carry- | ing the seed,
will come again with joy, shoulder- | ing their sheaves. R**

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

The reading may be announced:

A reading from 1 Thessalonians.

*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.*

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit.

²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to
what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

²³May 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. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

The reading may be concluded:

Word of God, word of life.

The assembly responds:

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28

The gospel is announced.

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not

worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.”²⁸ This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The gospel concludes:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Guided by the light of Christ, let us pray for the coming dawn of joy, healing, and comfort for all God’s people.

A brief silence.

Guiding Lord, bless church leaders, volunteers, teachers, musicians, acolytes, deacons, pastors, seminarians, and those discerning a call to ministry. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Creating God, protect Earth’s wilderness, especially where the lands are isolated and unexplored. Watch over all living creatures who remain free from human exploitation. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Prince of Peace, send us your Spirit of unity, so that justice may spring up among the nations. Give us the will to repair the broken systems that perpetuate injustice. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Merciful God, comfort your children who are mourning, bind up the brokenhearted, and heal our wounds. We pray for those who are homeless or imprisoned, refugees, those who struggle with addiction or mental illness, and all in need (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Lord of justice, strengthen and increase the ministry of food pantries, meal service deliveries, employment training programs, and advocacy for equity among all classes and races. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Eternal God, clothe us in your garments of salvation, so that together we may rejoice in your presence with the saints who have died and with those unable to be with us today. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We raise our prayers to you, O God, in the name of the one who is, who was, and who is to come, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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