

Worship in the Home: November 29, 2020

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Worship in the Home

First Sunday of Advent, Year B November 29, 2020

In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While you cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home. As with our prayers in the gathered assembly for worship, you are encouraged to prepare or adapt them locally for your context.

Stir up your power, and come! The psalmist's plea in Psalm 80:2 has become familiar to us in the Advent prayers. Isaiah wants God to rip the heavens open. Both cry out for an apparently distant, angry God to show up, to save, to restore. When we hear Jesus describing the coming of the Son of Man with stars falling from heaven, it can sound dire and horrible, not like anything we would ever hope for. But when we really look at the suffering of people God loves, we can share the hope that God would tear open the heavens and come.

Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. During this season, you may wish to include an Advent wreath where you pray, and light one candle. You may light your Advent wreath each day this week. A prayer to use throughout the week appears at the end of this blog.

Then, one person may lead in this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen.

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 64:1-9

This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40-55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—

²as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
⁴From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for you.
⁵You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
⁶We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
⁷There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
⁸Yet, O LORD, you are as a father to us;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

¹Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph ¹like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
²In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and ¹come to help us.
³Restore ¹us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹shall be saved.
⁴O LORD ¹God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your ¹people pray?
⁵You have fed them with the ¹bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of ¹tears to drink.
⁶You have made us the derision ¹of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh ¹us to scorn.
⁷Restore us, O ¹God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹shall be saved.
¹⁷Let your hand be upon the one at ¹your right hand,
the one you have made so strong ¹for yourself.
¹⁸And so will we never turn away from you;
give us life, that we may call upon your name.
¹⁹Restore us, O LORD ¹God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹shall be saved.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.

³Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in Christ, in speech and knowledge of every kind—⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the communion of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Mark 13:24-37

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

[Jesus said:] ²⁴In those days, after that suffering,

the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light,

²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶Then they will see 'the Son-of-Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. ²⁷Then the Son-of-Man will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like someone going on a journey, who leaving home and putting the slaves in charge of their own work, commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the lord of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else coming suddenly, the lord may find you asleep. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think on this:

Isaiah gives us words for the longings that are present in all the world: "O God, would that you would tear open the heavens and come down!" We are rightly afraid that our sins have delayed and hidden God's coming to us with healing and hope. We know ourselves to be held by our iniquity rather than held by God, the merciful potter. But in Mark's Gospel, Jesus joins us in not knowing when the day of healing will be. And in the very next chapter, the Gospel begins to tell of his death. We are to keep awake, like a doorkeeper watching for the return of the homeowner. Then the amazing thing happens. God does come: at evening in the supper when Jesus gives himself away and prays in the garden; at midnight when he is arrested; at cockcrow when he is denied; at dawn when he begins to be taken to the cross; and yet again at dawn when the women at the door of the tomb discover that he is risen. In Mark's Gospel the heavens have been torn

open and God has come among all the world's suffering. Christ is with us still. Forgiven and strengthened by that word, as Paul says, we may wait for his full revealing. We are called to be doorkeepers still watching on behalf of all the needy world and yet bearing witness to God's present mercy.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "My Lord, What a Morning" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 438 / This Far By Faith 40), "Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 247), "Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning" (All Creation Sings 949). Links to hymns in the public domain are provided below.

[My Lord What a Morning](#)

[Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning](#)

Then pray these intercessions:

On this first Sunday of the church year, let us pray that God comes quickly to this weary world; we respond to each petition with words from today's psalm, "Come to help us."

A brief silence.

Immortal, invisible God only wise, we pray for the church, both our congregation and assemblies around the globe. Give us your life. Show us your presence. Grant us your wisdom. Shepherd for another year of grace our pastor(s), deacons, musicians, and all who minister in the church.

A brief silence.

Stir up your strength, O God.

Come to help us.

God of the sparrow, God of the whale, protect the animals, whether wild or farmed or tame. Restore devastated habitats and polluted waters. Calm the storms that devastate the coasts. Renew the face of the earth and our relationship to it.

A brief silence.

Stir up your strength, O God.

Come to help us.

Mighty Fortress, protect all people who are poor or oppressed. Grant that the leaders of nations respond with justice and relief to those who suffer. We pray especially for the people of Honduras. Bless all elected officials as they assume new leadership roles.

A brief silence.

Stir up your strength, O God.

Come to help us.

Beautiful Savior, abide with us during December. Give your beauty to our holiday preparations in this challenging season and your grace to the many who have little to celebrate this year.

A brief silence.

Stir up your strength, O God.

Come to help us.

Mothering God, visit with your power any who are homeless or unemployed, and all who are hungry. Protect children from all manner of abuse. Comfort those who live with chronic pain, anxieties, and addictions. We pray especially for Shape us to become your arms of mercy.

A brief silence.

Stir up your strength, O God.

Come to help us.

Healer of our every ill, save all peoples from the coronavirus. Sustain medical workers, and provide for hospitals and clinics. Heal the sick, accompany the dying, and comfort the mourners.

A brief silence.

Stir up your strength, O God.

Come to help us.

Rock of ages, we wait for you, we stand on you. Receive now our private prayers.

A longer period of silence.

Stir up your strength, O God.

Come to help us.

Lord of all hopefulness, we give thanks for all the faithful: for Andrew, the first disciple to follow Jesus; for those who died while waiting for justice and peace; for all who have died of COVID-19; and for those we name here before you. . . . At the end, bring us with them into your shining presence.

A brief silence.

Stir up your strength, O God.

Come to save us.

Eternal Father, strong to save, receive our prayers for the sake of your Son Jesus, who came, who comes, and who will come, to bring us life.

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Come Now, O Prince of Peace/Ososǒ, ososǒ" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 247), "O Lord, How Shall I Meet You" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 241). Links to hymns in the public domain are provided below.

[O Lord, How Shall I Meet You](#)

Then conclude with these prayers:

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Holy God,

the Beginning and the Ending, our Hope as we wait,
we praise you for joining us to your people of old.

We bless you for your prophets who call us to righteousness
and promise a new earth with peace for all.

For the Word of your covenant, we thank you, O God.

We thank you, O God.

We praise you for the coming of Jesus our Lord,
who lifts up the lowly, heals the suffering world,
and proclaims your way of mercy and truth.

For your Word who is Christ, we magnify you, O God.

We magnify you, O God.

Send your Spirit on all who receive your Word.

Nurture our faith with your grace,
accompany us with your might,
and empower our zeal for your justice and joy.

For your Word through the church, we praise you, O God.

We praise you, O God.

All praise to you, holy God,
today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen.

Amen.

Offering

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you.

Offering Prayer

Generous God, you have created all that is, and you provide for us in every season. Bless all that we offer, that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing. In the name of Jesus, Emmanuel, we pray. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Then speak the Blessing:

The Creator of the stars bless our Advent waiting,
the long-expected Savior fill us with love,
the unexpected Spirit guide our journey,
+ now and forever.

Amen.

Here is a brief prayer to use as you light your candle on the Advent wreath this coming week:

Blessed are you, O God. Wake us up so that we are ready to greet our Lord Jesus when he comes, and prepare us to welcome him into our hearts and homes.

Amen.

Devotional Music Links: For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[When He Comes on That Day](#);" "[Drop Dew From Heaven](#);" "[Let Desert Bloom](#)."

Readings for the Week:

Monday (Andrew, Apostle) John 1:35-42. **Tuesday** Revelation 18:1-10. **Wednesday** Micah 5:1-5a. **Thursday** Psalm (commemoration of Francis Xavier, missionary to Asia, 1552) Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13. **Friday** (commemoration of John of Damascus, theologian and hymnwriter, c. 749) Jeremiah 1:4-10. **Saturday** Ezekiel 36:24-28. **Second Sunday of Advent** (commemoration of Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, c. 342) Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8.

Daily Prayer Resources are available, including simple forms of Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer; Responsive Prayer; and prayers for mealtimes and other occasions.

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able to provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain. Other suggestions provided above may be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

To purchase copies of [Evangelical Lutheran Worship](#) and [All Creation Sings](#) for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648. Selected hymns from [All Creation Sings](#) will be provided for limited use.

Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

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Thank you to those who clean the Church following worship.

In House Church Services have been cancelled until further notice.

Please keep in your prayers this week: Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Noah Klenken (Fred Fixsen's Nephew), Cal Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Bill Warner, David Warner, Emily (Ben & Casey's Daughter), Terry Newgard, Judy Wings, Steve Murdock.

Family and Friends of: Elaine Marsyla, who passed away recently.

Pastor's Mid-Week Message – November 25, 2020
Thanks-giving and Thanks-living

"I am thankful," says an unknown author, "for the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours, because it means that I am alive..." Then he adds, "And for the person behind me in church who sings off-key because it means that I can hear." There is somebody who knows how to be thankful. This Thursday is Thanksgiving Day. It is when we celebrate our bounty as a nation, and express our thanks to the One who is the source of all that we have. Maybe we will even give some thought to those not as blessed as we. For truly, we are some of the most fortunate people on this planet. A man named Michael Christensen spent some time with Mother Teresa in the slums of Calcutta. In his book *City Streets, City People*, he tells of the incredible burden of suffering that Mother Teresa witnessed each day. He reports that Mother Teresa rescued an abandoned baby from the gutters. The child's hand and feet had been gnawed away by rats. At the end of the day, Mother Teresa asked Christensen if he had seen Jesus. Christensen, still focused on the horror around them, admitted he didn't see Jesus anywhere. Mother Teresa explained Jesus' teachings from Matthew 25 about taking care of the poor, the hungry, the weak. And then she said quite simply, "You did it to me." "You did it to me." Mother Teresa saw Jesus all around her every day.

We, the church, are called to be the answer and the solution to poverty, need, and injustice in our society. We serve an all-powerful God who cares for those who are powerless. We worship an Almighty Father who is a protector of widows and orphans. We claim as Savior a man about whom it was written in 2 Corinthians 8:9: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich." The Lord's perfection includes perfect love, perfect mercy, perfect justice, and perfect peace. That is the plan for the kingdom of God. And those people who try, however imperfectly, to create those conditions here on earth are doing kingdom work. They will be blessed.

An army chaplain was visiting wounded soldiers in the hospital. The chaplain offered to read some Bible passages to one young soldier. But the soldier said, "I'm cold," so the chaplain wrapped his own coat around the young man. Next, the soldier asked for something to drink. The chaplain propped up the soldier's head and held his own water canteen to the young man's lips. Then the chaplain asked again if he could read some passages to the young man. This time, the soldier replied, "If there is anything in that Bible that caused you to do what you've done for me, yes. Please read to me that part of the Bible."

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." The world will judge the Church by how well, or how poorly, we follow this teaching. Treat the poor, and hurting, and needy, the same way you would treat Jesus. That's how we are commanded to show our love.

Peace;

Pastor Bill Sass