

Worship in the Home: December 27, 2020

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Worship in the Home

First Sunday of Christmas, Year B December 27, 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.

The psalmist calls on the natural world, celestial bodies, fire and earth, creatures, and all humanity, to praise God. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon's song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God's salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we tell of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.

Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. You may wish to light a candle near where you pray and incorporate other symbols of Christmas. One person may lead in this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to God's people on earth.

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.

Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 61:10 — 62:3

To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that God's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for God has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
and 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.

^{62:1}For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until its vindication shines out like the dawn,
and its salvation like a burning torch.

²The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

³You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 148

¹Hallelujah! Praise the LORD¹ from the heavens;
praise God¹ in the heights.

²Praise the LORD,¹ all you angels;
sing praise, all you¹ hosts of heaven.

³Praise the LORD,¹ sun and moon;
sing praise, all you¹ shining stars.

⁴Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens,
and you waters above the heavens.

⁵Let them praise the name¹ of the LORD,
who commanded, and they¹ were created,

⁶who made them stand fast forever and ever,
giving them a law that shall not¹ pass away.

⁷Praise the LORD¹ from the earth,
you sea monsters¹ and all deeps;

⁸fire and hail,¹ snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, doing God's will;

⁹mountains¹ and all hills,
fruit trees¹ and all cedars;

¹⁰wild beasts¹ and all cattle,
creeping things and¹ flying birds;

¹¹sovereigns of the earth¹ and all peoples,
princes and all rulers¹ of the world;

¹²young¹ men and maidens,
old and¹ young together.

¹³Let them praise the name¹ of the LORD,
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over¹ earth and heaven.

¹⁴The LORD has raised up strength for the people and praise for all ¹ faithful servants, the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD. ¹ Hallelujah!

Second Reading: Galatians 4:4-7

Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as beloved children.

⁴When the fullness of time had come, God sent the Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹"Lord, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;

³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

³³And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him.

³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹When the parents had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think on this:

The texts for the First Sunday of Christmas, on the third day of the feast this year, are painfully honest about death. Two birds — the offering of poor people who could not afford a lamb — are to be ritually killed for the sake of the purification of the mother from the blood of childbirth, but also to stand in for Jesus, their first born son, to redeem him from death. Two old people also show themselves ready to die. And Simeon foretells the death of Jesus, who is in fact not finally redeemed but who himself will be the Lamb who saves us all in his cross-death. In all of this, we may hear echoes of our own death: those inner thoughts of ours may be revealed. But listen more deeply: death itself is overcome. The Child has come to clothe us in God's salvation, to redeem us. Jesus Christ, born among us, is light for all people, like a burning torch or like dawn in our darkness. With Anna, we hear the promises of the scripture and sing of the Child who saves us. With Simeon, we take the Child into our hands — in the holy communion when that is possible, in the holy scriptures always. That Child is now alive among us: Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. God has sent the Spirit of Christ into our hearts so that as free and adopted children of God, together with Christ, we may witness to God's mercy in our cities.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "That Boy-Child of Mary" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 293, This Far By Faith 54), "In His Temple Now Behold Him" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 417), "What Child Is This" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 296). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[In His Temple Now Behold Him](#)

[What Child Is This](#)

Then pray these intercessions:

On this first Sunday after Christmas Day, let us pray for all who are in need, responding to each petition with the words "In mercy, redeem the world."

A brief silence.

O God, Abba-Father, Son, and Spirit: bless your church throughout the world with the joy of your salvation and with perseverance through this time of limited assembly worship. Make our homes like temples filled with your praise.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church, gracious God:

In mercy, redeem the world.

In the cold north, keep safe your whole creation until springtime arrives. Protect the underground seeds and the hibernating animals. Make snowfall into a blessing.

A brief silence.

We pray for the earth, gracious God:

In mercy, redeem the world.

Cause righteousness and praise to spring forth in every land. Inspire leaders to serve with compassion and integrity, caring for the common good. Bring peace within and between the nations. Accompany the United Kingdom as it finds its new way forward.

A brief silence.

We pray for the nations, gracious God:

In mercy, redeem the world.

As 2020 comes to its end, we ask you to help us overcome its heartaches and to welcome 2021 with hope. Keep revelers safe from contagion. In the New Year, give all peoples an increase of health and harmony.

A brief silence.

We pray for 2021, gracious God:

In mercy, redeem the world.

Bless our elders with the peace and joy of Simeon and Anna. Strengthen those who have retired, those who work in older age, and those in need of income, food, or health care. Embrace those isolated by dementia, and connect young and old across generations.

A brief silence.

We pray for elders, gracious God:

In mercy, redeem the world.

This week we remember before you the infants of Bethlehem slain by King Herod. Protect all children around the world from abuse, hunger, and abandonment. Give to all children a loving home and stable education, that they may grow strong and live filled with wisdom.

A brief silence.

We pray for children, gracious God:

In mercy, redeem the world.

Come to all who are in need, the hungry, the homeless, the war-torn. Guide us in and through this fearsome pandemic. Visit those sick with COVID-19. Comfort all who live with depression or fear. Abide with all for whom the holiday season is overwhelmed by sorrow. We pray especially for

A brief silence.

We pray for all in need, gracious God:

In mercy, redeem the world.

As Simeon held the infant Jesus in his arms, we now ask you to hold us in your care, O loving God. Adopt us as your own, and listen to our silent prayers.

A longer period of silence.

We pray for ourselves, gracious God:

In mercy, redeem the world.

We praise you for all who have died in the faith: for the apostle and evangelist John, and for those we name here before you. . . . And when our own death approaches, let us depart in your peace, ready to join with all your saints in life everlasting.

A brief silence.

We pray for peace at the end, gracious God:

In mercy, redeem us.

O God, Abba-Father, Son, and Spirit: as you received the sacrifices of Mary and Joseph, receive now our prayers, now and forever.

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Angels, from the Realms of Glory" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 275), "In the Bleak Midwinter" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 294). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[Angels, from the Realms of Glory](#)

[In the Bleak Midwinter](#)

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

Gracious God, you came to us as one unknown, bringing joy and salvation to the earth. Nourish us at your banquet table, that with all who welcome your birth we may proclaim your peace, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior. **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:

Almighty God,
who sent the Holy Spirit to Mary,
proclaimed joy through the angels,
sent the shepherds with good news,
and led the magi by a star,
bless us this day + through the Word made flesh.

Amen.

Here is a brief prayer to use as a table grace for the 12 days of Christmas:

With joy and gladness we feast upon your love, O God.
You have come among us in Jesus, your Son,
And your presence now graces this table.
May Christ dwell in us that we might bear his love to all the world,
For he is Lord forever and ever.

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: "[O Laughing Light](#);" "[Nunc Dimittis](#);" "[All Praise to Thee](#)."

Readings for the Week:

Monday (The Holy Innocents, Martyrs) Matthew 2:13-18. **Tuesday** (John, Apostle and Evangelist) John 21:20-25. **Wednesday** 2 Peter 3:8-13. **Thursday** John 8:12-19. **Friday** (Name of Jesus) Numbers 6:22-27. **Saturday** (Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehe, renewer of the church, 1872) Psalm 148. **Second Sunday of Christmas** Jeremiah 31:7-14 or Sirach 24:1-12; Psalm 147:12-20 or Wisdom 10:15-21; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:[1-9] 10-18.

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 and selected hymns for limited use. 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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Lathrop and Gail Ramshaw.

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 Winges, Steve Murdock, Bob Broberg.