

Sunday, December 11th 2022

Gathering hymn:

Prepare the Royal Highway ELW 264

**1 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!**

**2 God's people, see him coming:
your own eternal king!
Palm branches strew before him!
Spread garments! Shout and sing!
God's promise will not fail you!
No more shall doubt assail you! Refrain**

**3 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**

**4 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**

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; 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 35:1-10

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus **2**it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.”

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

7 the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

8 A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God’s people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

10 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Psalm : Luke 1:46b-55

46b My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

47 My spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48 for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed

49 you, the Almighty, have done great things for me and holy is your name.

50 You have mercy on those who fear you, from generation to generation.

51 You have shown strength with your arm and scattered the proud in their conceit,

52 casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly.

53 You have filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

54 You have come to the aid of your servant Israel, to remember the promise of mercy,

55 the promise made to our forebears, to Abraham and his children forever.

Second Reading: James 5:7-10

In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.

7 Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. **8** You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. **9** Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! **10** As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.

2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples **3**and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" **4** Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: **5** the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. **6** And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." **7** As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A

reed shaken by the wind? **8** What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. **9** What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. **10** This is the one about whom it is written,

‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

Hymn Of The Day

All earth is Hopeful ELW# 266

- 1 All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!
Furrows lie open for God's creative task:
this, the labor of people who struggle to see
how God's truth and justice set ev'rybody free.**
- 2 People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel";
she conceived him, "God with us,"
our brother, whose birth
restores hope and courage to children of this earth.**
- 3 Mountains and valleys will have to be prepared;
new highways opened, new protocols declared.**

**Almost here! God is nearing, in beauty and grace!
All clear ev'ry gateway, in haste, come out in haste!**

- 4 We first saw Jesus a baby in a crib.
This same Lord Jesus today has come to live
in our world; he is present, in neighbors we see
our Jesus is with us, and ever sets us free.**

Prayers of Intercession

As we prepare for the fullness of Christ's presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope.

A brief silence.

Gracious God, we rejoice in the gifts of your Spirit. Equip the global church to magnify your love and peace in every land. We pray for the work of the Lutheran World Federation and ELCA Global Mission.

God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Abundant God, we rejoice in your creation. Revive lands we have squandered and depleted. Make gardens flourish in cities and neighborhoods. Cleanse polluted air and water so living things may breathe, drink, and praise you.

God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Righteous God, we rejoice in your justice. End racism and oppression. Deliver all who are unjustly imprisoned or persecuted. Reconcile nations and peoples in conflict (regions in turmoil may be named). Help us pray for our enemies.

God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Healing God, we rejoice in your compassion. Comfort any in distress because of worry, illness, or loss (especially). Strengthen and protect health care workers, rescue teams, crisis counselors, and all who risk themselves to keep others safe.

God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Abiding God, we rejoice in your company. Give us calm and patient hearts as we gather with family and friends. Keep us mindful of those for whom this season is not happy. Console the grieving and surround them with loving support.

God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Faithful God, we rejoice with Mary, Mother of our Lord, and with all the saints, that your mercy endures for all generations. Look with favor on those who have died and lead us to joyfully sing of your everlasting promises.

God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of our longing, you know our deepest needs. By your Spirit, gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Communion Songs

What child is this ELW 296,

- 1 What child is this, who, laid to rest,
 on Mary's lap is sleeping?
 Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
 while shepherds watch are keeping?
 This, this is Christ the king,
 whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
 haste, haste to bring him laud,
 the babe, the son of Mary!**

- 2 Why lies he in such mean estate
 where ox and ass are feeding?
 Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
 the silent Word is pleading.
 Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
 the cross be borne for me, for you;
 hail, hail the Word made flesh,
 the babe, the son of Mary!**

- 3 So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
 come, peasant, king, to own him.
 The King of kings salvation brings;
 let loving hearts enthrone him.
 Raise, raise the song on high,**

**the virgin sings her lullaby;
joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary!**

Love Has Come ELW# 292

**1 Love has come—a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.**

**2 Love is born! Come, share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother;
what is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers;
Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.**

**3 Love has come and never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas;
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!**

Sending Song

Hark the Glad sound ELW# 239

- 1 Hark, the glad sound! The Savior comes,
the Savior promised long;
let ev'ry heart prepare a throne
and ev'ry voice a song.**

- 2 He comes the pris'ners to release,
in Satan's bondage held.
The gates of brass before him burst,
the iron fetters yield.**

- 3 He comes the broken heart to bind,
the bleeding soul to cure,
and with the treasures of his grace
to enrich the humble poor.**

- 4 Our glad hosannas, Prince of peace,
your welcome shall proclaim,
and heav'n's eternal arches ring
with your beloved name.**