

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
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*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy
Spirit. Matthew 28: 19*

December 23, 2018
Advent 4



Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Micah 5:2-5a

The prophet Micah, having pronounced judgment upon Judah, speaks of a future shepherd-king who, like David, will come from the small town of Bethlehem. (Ephrathah refers to the area around Bethlehem.) This king will restore Israel and bring peace. New Testament writers understood this passage to be referring to Jesus.

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of
the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great

to the ends of the earth;
5^aand he shall be the one of peace.

Psalm: Luke 1:46b-55

We will speak the Psalm with the congregation saying the verses in bold.

46^bMy soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

47my 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:

49you, 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.**

51You 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.**

53You 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,**

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

Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10

The author of Hebrews uses the image of religious sacrifice to convey the significance of Christ's coming. Through obedient acceptance of God's will, Christ allows his own body to become the greatest sacrifice of all, one through which we are made a holy people.

5Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;

6in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

7Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God'
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me)."

8When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), 9then he

added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Gospel: Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]

We are presented with Elizabeth, John's mother, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, two women filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. In Elizabeth's inspired greeting and Mary's song of praise we hear of a saving God who remembers, scatters, lifts up, and fulfills all things.

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." [

⁴⁶And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Prayers of Intercession

As we await the coming of Christ, we pray in hope for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Faithful Lord, you keep your promises. Move your church to sing like Mary and rejoice like Elizabeth. Teach us to sing of your faithfulness all our days. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Ancient of Days, with joy you danced over the waters and birthed creation. Give us joy in caring for the soil beneath us, the water around us, and the sky above us. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Prince of peace, your sacrifice gives abundant life to all. Raise up leaders in every nation whose goals are health and well-being for all people and creation. Grant them wisdom and compassion to serve as you would have them serve. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Good Shepherd, you feed your flock. Fill the hungry with good things. Lift up the lowly. Accompany the refugee. Comfort the lonely. Heal the sick (*especially*). Send us in haste to surround them with your love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Love Incarnate, you are with us at the manger, on the cross, and on the resurrection road. Walk with all who live with depression, grief, or heartache in this season. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Ever-living God, you are Alpha and Omega. We thank you for all who sing now in the heavenly choir, especially those dear to us. Join our voices with theirs in praise of the Christ child. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Confident that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we bring to you these prayers and those unspoken, in the name of Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.