

MORE THAN THOSE WHO WATCH FOR THE MORNING

An Advent and Christmas Liturgy from the
Psalms for 2020

The Major readings are the Psalm from the Revised Common Liturgy, Year B.

Congregation, please read the bold print.

Women read the pink text, Men read the blue.

Opening (Ps. 130:1,2 NRSV): Each Sunday (except Christmas Day)

I wait for the LORD,

My soul waits, and in his word, I hope;

My soul waits for the Lord

More than those who watch for the morning,

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ADVENT 1: THE HOPE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

NOVEMBER 29, 2020

The Text: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 (NRSV)

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth

before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.

Stir up your might, and come to save us!

Restore us, O God;

Let your face shine, that we may be saved.

O LORD God of hosts,

how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

You have fed them with the bread of tears,

and given them tears to drink in full measure.

You make us the scorn of our neighbors;

our enemies laugh among themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts;

let your face shine, that we may be saved.

But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,

the one whom you made strong for yourself.

Then we will never turn back from you;

give us life, and we will call on your name.

Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;

let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Remembrance:

We light the first candle to remember John the Baptist. John prepared the way for the Messiah. He knew that God's kingdom could only come about through repentance and was open to everyone: oppressors and oppressed alike. Anyone could be saved and turn their life around. The last of the prophets, because of his martyrdom, John did not see the coming of the kingdom, but he hoped for it.

A Prayer:

Shepherd King,

In dark of our lives, shine your hope into our hearts.

When the night of our circumstances seems bleak and the kingdom is slow to come, give us the strength of your hope.

As hope is the bedrock of faith, give us the strength to persevere.

Give us the faith to serve in the hard places.

Help us to know that we shall never hope in vain.

ADVENT 2: PEACE FOR ZECHARIAH, THE PRIEST

DECEMBER 6, 2020

Text: Psalm 85:1,2, 8-13 (NRSV)

LORD, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you pardoned all their sin.

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.

The LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness will go before him,
and will make a path for his steps.

Remembrance:

We light the second candle to remember Zechariah the priest. Like this elderly servant of God, we are prone to doubting God's promises. We do our duty to God by rote, inwardly despairing of peace on earth or in our hearts. God, however, will guide us back to him, if only we will be still long enough to hear his voice.

A Prayer:

Great High Priest,

In our turbulent times, we so often despair of harmony around us and within us.

Like the waves of Galilee, help us to stop our raging as you say to us "Peace! Be Still".

Calm us inwardly, so that the balm of your comfort may flow out of us to a hurting world.

ADVENT 3: THE JOY OF ELIZABETH

DECEMBER 13, 2020

The Text: Psalm 126 (NRSV)

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,

we were like those who dream.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter,

and our tongue with shouts of joy;

then it was said among the nations,

“The LORD has done great things for them.”

The LORD has done great things for us,

and we rejoiced.

Restore our fortunes, O LORD,

like the watercourses in the Negeb.

May those who sow in tears

reap with shouts of joy.

Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,

shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

Remembrance:

We light the third candle to remember Elizabeth. Long barren past hope of conceiving, when Mary arrives, she is not selfishly inward-focused, but filled with the Holy Spirit and prepared to share the joy of what God is doing in her young cousins' life. As she does so, her own joy quickens. She continues to stand strong in this joyful obedience, doing what no one else can.

A Prayer:

Joy of Our Desire,

So often we are self-absorbed and endlessly chase our own happiness to futility. Remind us that true joy comes from patiently waiting, and being ready for the Holy Spirit. It comes from sharing the joys of others, and mentoring them. It comes from being ready to stand in obedience, even when it is unpopular. Lord, teach us the joy that looks for the morning.

ADVENT 3: THE LOVE OF MARY

DECEMBER 20, 2020

The Text: Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 (NRSV)

I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever;

with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;

your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David:

'I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.' "

Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said:

"I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people.

I have found my servant David;

with my holy oil I have anointed him;

my hand shall always remain with him;

my arm also shall strengthen him.

The enemy shall not outwit him,

the wicked shall not humble him.

I will crush his foes before him

and strike down those who hate him.

My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him;

and in my name his horn shall be exalted.

I will set his hand on the sea

and his right hand on the rivers.

He shall cry to me,

'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'

Remembrance:

We light the fourth candle to remember Mary, the mother of Jesus. In Mary's Magnificat we see she believed in God's strong covenant love that rewards humility, keeps promises, conquers evil and returns justice. Little wonder that she could trust God with her body and her reputation, through many trials. Thus all generations call her "blessed".

A Prayer:

O Love that Will Not Let Me Go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee.
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths, its
flow may richer, fuller be.

ADVENT SONG: LONGING FOR LIGHT

Each week sing verse A, then the verse for the appropriate week. Verse C is for Christmas Day.

A. Longing for light, we wait in darkness;
longing for truth, we turn to You.

Make us your own, Your holy people, light for
the world to see.

1. Longing for hope, many are fearful,
longing for strength to wait upon You.

You are the God who keeps His promise;
help us to trust in You.

2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled,
longing for rest in our busy lives.

Your peace is greater than our understand-
ing; You are the Prince of Peace!

3. Longing for joy, many are tired,
longing for songs from heaven anew.
Make us rejoice over Your salvation, until the
world will sing:

4. Longing for love, many are lonely,
longing for warmth, many are cold.

Let us be servants to one another, making
Your kingdom come.

Chorus:

*Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts, shine
through the darkness.*

*Christ, be our light! Shine in Your church
gathered today.*

C. Lord, you have come on this Christmas
morning. It is your love that makes us anew.

We are your body, bearing your presence,
birthing the peace of God.

Chorus:

*Christ, you're the Light! Shine from our
hearts, banish the darkness.*

*Christ, you're the Light! Shine from Your
church gathered today.*

CLOSING: EACH WEEK (Except Christmas)

Read Responsively (Psalm 130:7 NRSV)

O Israel, hope in the LORD!

**For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.**

CHRISTMAS DAY LITURGY

THE TEXT: Psalm 96 (NRSV)

O sing to the LORD a new song;

sing to the LORD, all the earth.

Sing to the LORD, bless his name;

tell of his salvation from day to day.

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

For all the gods of the peoples are idols,

but the LORD made the heavens.

Honor and majesty are before him;

strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,

ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;

bring an offering, and come into his courts.

Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

Say among the nations, "The LORD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity."

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;

let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

let the field exult, and everything in it.

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD;

for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

OPENING (Psalm 40:1,2 NRSV):

I waited patiently for the LORD;

he inclined to me and heard my cry.

He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog,

and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

CELEBRATION:

We light the center candle to celebrate the Christ child: The present and coming King. God with us. Love incarnate: he is our peace, who has broken down every wall. Our Hope Eternal. Let us rejoice and be glad.

A PRAYER:

Dayspring from On High,

Shine upon us, shine around us, shine through us, shine from us. Like a laser beam, banish the darkness, remove the rot, cut the diamonds from the rough, and point the way back to God. Help us to be lightbearers in this dark world until the final morning comes.

SING LONGING FOR LIGHT HERE

CLOSING (Psalm 40:3 NRSV):

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.