

Worship Plan for Sunday, December 12, 2021
Third Sunday of Advent

Introduction to the day

Christ's presence in our midst in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of the God in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one "more powerful" than John, even with a winnowing fork in hand, is good news—and cause for exultation—for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

GATHERING

PRELUDE

BELL RINGING

WELCOME AND INTRO TO THE DAY -- BRYSON

GATHERING SONG

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH AND PRAYER (3 Advent C Wreath)

We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath
that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent.
As we light the candles on this wreath,
strengthen our hearts
as we await the Lord's coming in glory.
Enlighten us with your grace,
that we may serve our neighbors in need.
Grant this through Christ our Lord,
whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.

Amen.

Light three candles.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God,
who alone does wonders,
who lifts up the lowly,
who fills the hungry with good things.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the tender mercy of our God.

God for whom we wait,
in the presence of one another,
we confess our sin before you.

**We fail in believing that your good news is for us.
We falter in our call to tend your creation.
We find our sense of self in material wealth.
We fear those different from ourselves.
We forget that we are your children
and turn away from your love.
Forgive us, Blessed One,
and assure us again of your saving grace.
Amen.**

God, in Christ Jesus, has looked with favor upon you!
Through the power of the Holy Spirit,
✠ your sins are forgiven.
You are children of the Most High,
inheritors of the eternal promise, and recipients of divine mercy.
God strengthens you anew to follow the way of peace.
Amen.

GREETING

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

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.
Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John,
that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus
Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now
and forever.
Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Zephaniah 3:14-20

A reading from Zephaniah.

*The prophet Zephaniah's message is mostly one of judgment for sin. This reading, however,
which comes from the conclusion of the book, prophesies joy for Judah and Jerusalem. Judgment
has led to repentance, and God's salvation is at hand.*

¹⁴Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

¹⁶On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.
¹⁷The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing ¹⁸as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it.
¹⁹I will deal with all your oppressors at that time.
And I will save the lame and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.
²⁰At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.

OPTION B: Word of God, word of life

Word of God, word of life.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Isaiah 12:2-6

²Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might, and has become my salvation.
³**With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation. R**
⁴And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call on God's name;
make known the deeds of the LORD among the nations; proclaim that this name is exalted.
⁵**Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be known in all the earth.**
⁶Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. **R**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

GOSPEL: Luke 3:7-18

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

John the Baptist heralds the mighty one who is coming. John teaches that preparation for God's reign is not a matter of identity but of bearing fruits of merciful justice, radical generosity, and vocational integrity.

⁷John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" ¹¹In reply he said to them, "Whoever

has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.”

¹²Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?”

¹³He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

¹⁸So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S TIME

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

In this season of watching and waiting, let us pray for all people and places that yearn for God's presence.

A brief silence.

Holy God, renew your church and raise up leaders who announce your good news. Grant peace to congregations and seminarians in the midst of transition. Guide the work of candidacy and call committees. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Creating God, your Spirit brought forth the earth and all that is in it. Breathe life into us, that we are inspired to live in harmony with one another and the planet. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Shepherding God, you lead your people in paths of righteousness. Raise up prophets in our own day who warn against captivity to greed and point us to the freedom found in generosity. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Nurturing God, you come near in times of worry and need. Cradle us in your arms, that we trust you and are not afraid. Attend to any who are hungry, imprisoned, or ill this day (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Rejoicing God, you exult over us in singing. Enliven the song of this assembly and bless the ministry of church musicians (*especially*). With instruments and dance, join our voices to the song of all creation. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give you thanks for your servants who showed us your goodness and grace (*especially*). By the power of your Spirit, keep us steadfast in faith until we make our home with you. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of new life, you come among us in the places we least expect. Receive these prayers and those of our hearts, in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

PEACE

MEAL

OFFERING

OFFERING MEDITATION MUSIC

OFFERING PRAYER

God of our waiting and watching, we offer the gifts of our hearts and our lives to the service of all your people. Prepare the way before us as we meet you in this simple meal, through Christ Jesus, our pathway and our peace.

Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy God, the Beginning and the End, our Salvation and our Hope, we praise you for creating a world of order and beauty.

When we brought on chaos, cruelty and despair, you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy.

At this end of the ages your Son Jesus came to bring us your love and to heal all the suffering world.

In the night in which he was betrayed,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his life, death, and resurrection, we await his coming again in righteousness and peace.

Send your Spirit on us and on this bread and wine we share:

strengthen our faith, increase our hope,

and bring to birth the justice and joy of your Son.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
in your holy Church,
both now and forever.

Amen

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come to Christ's banquet. Feast on God's gift of grace.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION -- IN UNISON

Most High God,

you have come among us at this table.

By the Spirit's power, form us to be bearers of your word, sharing gifts of mercy and grace with all, through Christ Jesus, our host and our guest.

Amen.

SENDING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BLESSING

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing,
so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit,
through Christ Jesus for whom we wait.

Amen.

SENDING SONG

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is near.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE --

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December 12, 2021
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
A Fresh Start

In Greece, a John the Baptist celebration is held every year, typically in June. A spectator once observed how thousands of pilgrims paraded down a trail to the floor of a great cavern, where mass baptisms were celebrated. One can imagine that the sense of anticipation among those who arrive at the festival for baptism is similar to what those who came to John in the wilderness experienced: expectation, hope, awe, maybe even fear. However, John made it clear that while he baptized them for repentance, the one who was coming would bring something totally different. Whereas John's baptism of water represented cleansing from their past, the baptism of Jesus is about a new future.

In the order for baptism in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the baptized are washed with water paired with the promise of God's love. God's love is enduring and eternal. Sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the sign of the cross forever, the baptized are invited to remember this promise daily and the good news it brings: every day, we begin anew.

This good news means that we don't have to drag with us the burdens of yesterday. We don't have to live in a hamster wheel of guilt or despair that things will never change. Nor do we have to keep a list on a mental chalkboard of how many times we've messed up. Rather, having been baptized in Christ, we are set free to greet the new dawn with a sense of expectation and wonder, knowing that no matter what the day brings, we are made new, we are forgiven, and God is with us.