

# Sunday, December 13, 2020

## Third Sunday of Advent, Year B

### Introduction

“Rejoice always,” begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. “All God’s children got a robe,” go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.

### Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### Readings and Psalm

#### [Psalm 126](#)

The LORD has done great things for us. (*Ps. 126:3*)

#### [1 Thessalonians 5:16-24](#)

*Kept in faith until the coming of Christ*

#### [John 1:6-8, 19-28](#)

*A witness to the light*

### Psalm: Psalm 126

*The LORD has done great things for us. (Ps. 126:3)*

<sup>1</sup>When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
then were we like those who dream.

<sup>2</sup>Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.  
Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.”

<sup>3</sup>The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we are glad indeed.

<sup>4</sup>Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses of the Negeb.

<sup>5</sup>Those who sowed with tears  
will reap with songs of joy.

<sup>6</sup>Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,  
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

## Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

*Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.*

<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise the words of prophets, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil.

<sup>23</sup>May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

A The Word of the Lord.

C THANKS BE TO GOD.

## Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

*John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.*

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light....

<sup>19</sup>This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup>He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup>And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." <sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup>He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,  
'Make straight the way of the Lord,'"  
as the prophet Isaiah said.

<sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" <sup>26</sup>John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup>the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." <sup>28</sup>This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

## Prayers of Intercession

When I say, "Hear us, O God," you respond, "**Your mercy is great.**"

God of power and might, shine your radiance and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

*A brief silence is held as we gather our prayers.*

God of preachers and messengers, you have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming good news. Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people who contribute their prayers and talents to public worship. Embed your word in their hearts.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of every living creature, you announce the year of your favor for all of creation. Extend your kindness and relief to endangered animals and plants. Strengthen the human beings who rely on the rhythms of nature to make their living.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of all peoples and nations, you plant us as your oaks of righteousness and ask us to care for one another. Be present with the leaders of every nation as they govern. Give them a spirit of righteousness, that your goodness and mercy may be revealed through them.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of exiles and wanderers, you repair what was once destroyed. We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm. Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of the powerful and helpless, you clothe us with strength when our spirits are weak and weary. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. Make your church a place of refuge and healing.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of every good gift: you are generous beyond measure.

We pray for the offerings we bring. When we stand in your presence, our gifts seem small: Bless them, we ask you, and the gift of ourselves, that the light of your presence may shine through them.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

God of sinners and saints, you offer joy even in the midst of our grief. We are grateful for the beloved, imperfect people whose lives testified to your radiant love. Anoint all who mourn with the oil of gladness.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Blessing**

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting,  
the long-expected Savior fill you with love,  
the unexpected Spirit guide your journey,

✝ now and forever.

**Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

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