**Worship Plan for Sunday December 15, 2019**

**SHARING OF CONCERNS AND CELEBRATIONS**

**GATHERING SONG** *Prepare the Royal Highway ELW 264*

**WREATH LIGHTING & PRAYER -** (Use this blessing when lighting the first three candles)

Blessed are you, God of might and majesty, for you promise to make the desert rejoice and blossom, to watch over the strangers, and to set the prisoners free.

As we light these candles, satisfy our hunger with your good gifts, open our eyes to the great things you have done for us, and fill us with patience until the coming of the Lord Jesus.

O ransomed people of the Lord, come,

**Let us travel on God’s holy way**

**And enter into Zion with singing.**

**Amen**

**CHOIR ANTHEM People Look East, Tom Mitchell**

*(The first reading is read by the lay assistant)*

**THE FIRST READING**:  Isaiah 35:1-10

A reading from the book of Isaiah.

35The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus 2it 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. 3Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. 4Say 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.”

5Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6then 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; 7the 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. 8A 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. 9No 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. 10And 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.

*The reading may be concluded:*

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Psalm 146:5-10**

5Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God,

**6who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever;**

7who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free;

**8the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.**

9The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

**10The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord!**

*Please stand to welcome the Gospel.*

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*(The gospel is read by the pastor)*

**GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11**

*The gospel is announced.*

The holy gospel according to St. Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

2When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples 3and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” 4Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5the 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. 6And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

7As 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? 8What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. 9What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ 11Truly 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.

*The gospel concludes:*

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**CHILDREN’S MESSAGE**

**SERMON**

**HYMN OF THE DAY** *All Earth is Hopeful (ELW 266)*

*(The pastor reads the introduction and the ending, the lay assistant reads the indented petitions.)*

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Keeping awake as we watch for Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Holy God, we rejoice that your promises take on flesh in Jesus. Grant patience to your church awaiting the fulfillment of your reign of justice and peace. Restore in us the hope that we are called to proclaim to the world. Hear us O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Life-giving God, we rejoice that you coax flowers from the desert and water from the wilderness. Send rain to parched fields and sun to flooded plains. Nurture all that lies sleeping under the frozen ground. Hear us O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Almighty God, we rejoice in your authority as Prince of peace. Deliver us from those who wield power through unjust and oppressive ways. Raise up prophets to speak your truth in this and every nation. Hear us O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Gracious God, we rejoice that you dwell in human bodies. Renew signs of your joyful presence in people of all shapes, sizes, ages, and abilities. *We pray especially for…. And for all those we now name, either aloud or silently in our hearts.* Empower all to embrace their callings and the gifts of your Spirit. Hear us O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Generous God, we rejoice that you create us to praise you. Strengthen the voices and hands of all who prepare to celebrate Christ’s birth with music, dancing, and proclamation, in worship and in the community. Hear us O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Eternal God, we rejoice that all who die in Christ are raised to new life. We thank you for the lives of those who have prepared the way for us and have now joined the great cloud of witnesses. Hear us O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You hear the cries of our hearts, O Lord. Fill us with hopeful expectation, that in each day and hour we may love and serve our neighbors, in Jesus’ name. **Amen.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:  
Blessed are you for the birth of creation.  
Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.  
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.  
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.  
Blessed are you in the prophets’ hopes and dreams.  
Blessed are you for Mary’s openness to your will.  
Blessed are you for your Son, Jesus, the Word made flesh.

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.”

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:  
**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

With this bread and cup we remember your Word   
dwelling among us full of grace and truth.  
We remember our new birth in Jesus’ death and resurrection.  
And we look with hope for your coming.  
**Come, Lord Jesus.**

Holy God, we long for your Spirit.  
Come among us. Bless this meal. May your Word take flesh in us.  
Awaken your people. Fill us with your light.  
Bring the gift of peace on earth.

And teach us to pray…

**LORD’S PRAYER**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,**

**thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;**

**and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;**

**and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.   
Amen.**

**INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

These are the gifts of God, for the people of God.

**Thanks be to God!**

**COMMUNION**

*(The prayer after communion is read by the lay assistant)*

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

God of blessing, at this table we have seen you face to face,

And in the gift of Christ’s body and blood,

Our hearts have been refreshed.

Send us out to share your grace with our neighbors

and bear witness to the one we have received:

Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**announcements**

**Blessing**The Lord bless you and keep you  
The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you  
The Lord look upon you with favor, + and give you peace.  
**Amen.**

*Turn to your neighbor and tell him or her,*

***In Jesus Christ***

***--- we have hope.***

***Share hope by the bucketful!***

**Sending Song** *People Look East (ELW 248)*

*(The dismissal is given by the lay assistant)***DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Share the Good News.  
**Thanks be to God!**

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