



Celebrate

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

January 31, 2021

In Deuteronomy God promises to raise up a prophet like Moses, who will speak for God; in Psalm 111 God shows the people the power of God's works. For the church these are ways of pointing to the unique authority people sensed in Jesus' actions and words. We encounter that authority in God's word, around which we gather, the word that prevails over any lesser spirit that would claim power over us, freeing us to follow Jesus.

Prayer of the Day

Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Today's reading is part of a longer discourse in Deuteronomy, an updating of the law for the Israelite community as the people wait to enter the promised land. Here Moses assures the people that God will continue to guide them through prophets who will proclaim the divine word.

[Moses said:] The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. ¹⁶This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." ¹⁷Then the LORD replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. ¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like

you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. ¹⁹Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. ²⁰But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die."



The fear of the LORD is the be - gin - ning of wis - dom.

Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the LORD with ¹ my whole heart,
in the assembly of the upright, in the ¹ congregation.

²Great are your ¹ works, O LORD,
pondered by all who de- ¹ light in them.

³Majesty and splendor ¹ mark your deeds,
and your righteousness en- ¹ dures forever.

⁴You cause your wonders to ¹ be remembered;
you are gracious and full ¹ of compassion. **R**

⁵You give food to ¹ those who fear you,
remembering forev- ¹ er your covenant.

⁶You have shown your people the power ¹ of your works
in giving them the lands ¹ of the nations.

⁷The works of your hands are faithful- ¹ ness and justice;
all of your pre- ¹ cepts are sure.

⁸They stand fast forev- ¹ er and ever,
because they are done in ¹ truth and equity. **R**

⁹You sent redemption to your people
and commanded your cove- ¹ nant forever;
holy and awesome ¹ is your name.

¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the begin- ¹ ning of wisdom;
all who practice this have a good understanding.
God's praise en- ¹ dures forever. **R**

Paul is concerned about the way some Corinthian Christians use their freedom in Christ as license to engage in non-Christian behavior that sets a damaging example to other, impressionable believers. Christians have a responsibility to each other that their behavior does not cause another to sin.

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ²Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; ³but anyone who loves God is known by him.

⁴Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “no idol in the world really exists,” and that “there is no God but one.” ⁵Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until

now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸“Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? ¹¹So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. ¹²But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

Gospel

Mark 1:21-28

Forces that would bring death and disease have taken hold of a man, yet they recognize Jesus and know what his power means for them. Jesus commands these forces to leave and people are amazed at his authority.

[Jesus and his disciples] went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²²They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”

²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

A brief silence.

For all who share the gospel and proclaim freedom in Christ throughout the world: prophets, teachers, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders; for the church and its ministries, let us pray.
Have mercy, O God.

For all God's works in creation: plants and animals, water and soil, forests and farms; and for those tasked with protecting our natural resources and all that exists, let us pray.
Have mercy, O God.

For government and leaders: cities and nations, rescue professionals and legal aid attorneys, elected officials and grassroots organizers; for all responsible for the well-being of civil society, let us pray.
Have mercy, O God.

For those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit: those who are sick and hospitalized, those living with HIV/AIDS, those struggling with mental illness, those who are hungry or homeless, and all in any need (*especially*); for caregivers, hospice workers, and home health aides, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For the concerns of this congregation: those who travel, those absent from worship, those celebrating birthdays or anniversaries; for the people of God in this place and for other needs in our community (*especially*), let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

For the covenant God made with us in the waters of baptism, in thanksgiving for the baptized who have died in the Lord, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 35:1-10. **Tuesday** (Presentation of Our Lord) Luke 2:22-40. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Ansgar, Bishop of Hamburg, missionary to Denmark and Sweden, 865) Jeremiah 29:1-14. **Thursday** Psalm 147:1-11, 20c. **Friday** (commemoration of the Martyrs of Japan, 1597) 1 Corinthians 9:1-16. **Saturday** Isaiah 46:1-13. **Fifth Sunday after Epiphany** Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39.

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