



The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down.

Happy are they who have the God of Jacob <sup>1</sup> for their help,  
 whose hope is in the <sup>1</sup> LORD their God;  
<sup>6</sup>who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that <sup>1</sup> is in them;  
 who keeps promis- <sup>1</sup> es forever;  
<sup>7</sup>who gives justice to those who are oppressed,  
 and food to <sup>1</sup> those who hunger.  
 The LORD sets the <sup>1</sup> captive free.  
<sup>8</sup>The LORD opens the eyes of the blind;  
 the LORD lifts up those who <sup>1</sup> are bowed down;  
 the LORD <sup>1</sup> loves the righteous. **R**  
<sup>9</sup>The LORD cares <sup>1</sup> for the stranger;  
 the LORD sustains the orphan and widow,  
 but frustrates the way <sup>1</sup> of the wicked.  
<sup>10</sup>The LORD shall <sup>1</sup> reign forever,  
 your God, O Zion, throughout  
 all generations. <sup>1</sup> Hallelujah! **R**

or Luke 1:46b-55; refrain, Luke 1:47 [not printed]

First Reading, continued

the unclean shall not travel on it,  
 but it shall be for God's people;  
 no traveler, not even fools, shall go  
 astray.  
<sup>9</sup>No 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.

<sup>10</sup>And 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.

## Second Reading

James 5:7-10

*In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.*

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.  
<sup>8</sup>You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of

the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup>Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! <sup>10</sup>As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

## Gospel

Matthew 11:2-11

*John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.*

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

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

<sup>11</sup>Truly 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 prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

As we prepare for the fullness of Christ's presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope.

A brief silence.

Gracious God, we rejoice in the gifts of your Spirit. Equip the global church to magnify your love and peace in every land. We pray for the work of the Lutheran World Federation and ELCA Global Mission. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Abundant God, we rejoice in your creation. Revive lands we have squandered and depleted. Make gardens flourish in cities and neighborhoods. Cleanse polluted air and water so living things may breathe, drink, and praise you. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Righteous God, we rejoice in your justice. End racism and oppression. Deliver all who are unjustly imprisoned or persecuted. Reconcile nations and peoples in conflict (*regions in turmoil may be named*). Help us pray for our enemies. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

## Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** Psalm 42. **Tuesday** (commemoration of Lucy, martyr, died 304) Jude 17-25. **Wednesday** (commemoration of John of the Cross, renewer of the church, died 1591) Zechariah 8:1-17. **Thursday** Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19. **Friday** 2 Samuel 7:18-22. **Saturday** John 3:31-36. **Fourth Sunday of Advent** Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25.

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Tracks 1 and 2



# Celebrate

Third Sunday of Advent  
December 11, 2022

*A note of joyful expectation marks today's worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God's reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ's advent among us.*

## Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## First Reading

Isaiah 35:1-10

*The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.*

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus <sup>2</sup>it 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.

<sup>3</sup>Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.

<sup>4</sup>Say 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."

<sup>5</sup>Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf  
unstopped;

<sup>6</sup>then 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;

<sup>7</sup>the 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.

<sup>8</sup>A highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the  
Holy Way;

continued