



# Celebrate

Second Sunday of Advent  
December 9, 2018

*Forerunners and messengers advance the advent of our God. While John the baptizer's voice in the wilderness may be the principal focus of the day, Malachi's prophesy could as easily herald the coming Lord Jesus as forerunner of the Lord of hosts. Finally all the baptized are called to participate in the sharing of the gospel. In so doing we prepare the way for the coming of the Lord and assist all flesh in capturing a vision of the "salvation of God."*

## Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge of your salvation; 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

Malachi 3:1-4

*The Lord announces a covenant with Israel. A messenger like Malachi (his name means "my messenger") shall prepare the way for the coming of the Lord by purifying and refining God's people, as silver and gold are refined.*

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>2</sup>But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

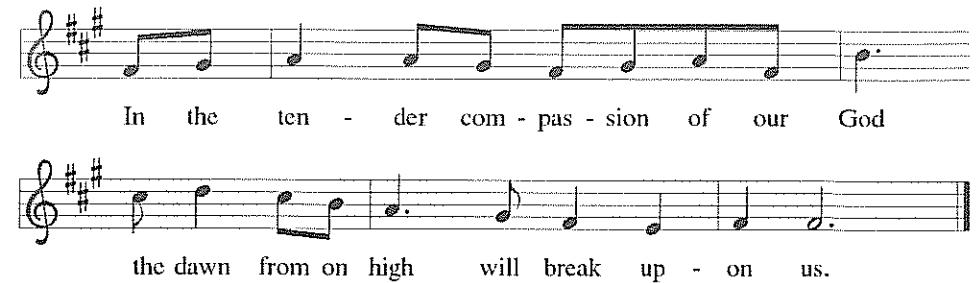
For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; <sup>3</sup>he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. <sup>4</sup>Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

*or Baruch 5:1-9 [not printed]*

*A poem of hope from the school of the prophet Jeremiah speaks of the return of scattered Israel from Babylon, but also looks beyond that to the end times when God's kingdom will be established.*

## Psalmody

Luke 1:68-79; refrain, Luke 1:78



Blessed are you, Lord, the <sup>1</sup> God of Israel,  
you have come to your people and <sup>1</sup> set them free.  
<sup>69</sup> **You have raised up for us a <sup>1</sup> mighty Savior,**  
**born of the house of your <sup>1</sup> servant David. R**  
<sup>70</sup> Through your holy prophets,  
you promised of old to save us <sup>1</sup> from our enemies,  
<sup>71</sup> from the hands of <sup>1</sup> all who hate us,  
<sup>72</sup> **to show mercy <sup>1</sup> to our forebears,**  
**and to remember your <sup>1</sup> holy covenant.**  
<sup>73</sup> This was the oath you swore to our <sup>1</sup> father Abraham:  
<sup>74</sup> to set us free from the hands of our <sup>1</sup> enemies,  
**free to worship you <sup>1</sup> without fear,**  
<sup>75</sup> **holy and righteous before you, all the days <sup>1</sup> of our life. R**  
<sup>76</sup> And you, child, shall be called the prophet of <sup>1</sup> the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord to pre-<sup>1</sup> pare the way,  
<sup>77</sup> **to give God's people knowledge <sup>1</sup> of salvation**  
**by the forgiveness <sup>1</sup> of their sins.**  
<sup>78</sup> In the tender compassion <sup>1</sup> of our God  
the dawn from on high shall <sup>1</sup> break upon us,  
<sup>79</sup> **to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shad- <sup>1</sup> ow of death,**  
**and to guide our feet into the <sup>1</sup> way of peace. R**

*The apostle Paul was the pastor of many new churches. He writes in this letter about his joy to be in partnership with the Christians of Philippi. Listen to how tender-hearted Paul, sometimes a stern preacher, is with his friends as he encourages them to grow in love and knowledge.*

I thank my God every time I remember you, <sup>1</sup>constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, <sup>2</sup>because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>3</sup>I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and

in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>5</sup>For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. <sup>6</sup>And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight <sup>7</sup>to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, <sup>8</sup>having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Gospel

Luke 3:1-6

*John the Baptist is a herald of the saving Lord, whose way is prepared by "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." As we hear the careful record of human leaders, we sense the spectrum of political and religious authority that will be challenged by this coming Lord.*

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, <sup>2</sup>during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, <sup>4</sup>as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
<sup>1</sup>Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.  
<sup>2</sup>Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth;  
<sup>3</sup>and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Prayers of Intercession

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

As we await the coming of Christ, we pray in hope for the church, the world, and all of creation.

*A brief silence.*

Prepare your church to share the good news, life-giving God. Put your word within us and dwell among us. Send us out to proclaim the mercy and salvation that abides in you. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Protect the creation, life-giving God. Sustain the mountains and hills. Restore the rivers. Give us wisdom and compassion to care for wilderness areas and urban ecosystems. Move us to care for your creation in all its forms and richness. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Purify the hearts of all people, life-giving God. Remove the hate that lives within us and among us. Mold us into peacemakers. Raise up leaders rooted in your love and fed by your word. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** Psalm 126. **Tuesday** Isaiah 19:18-25. **Wednesday** Isaiah 35:3-7. **Thursday** (commemoration of Lucy, martyr, 304) Isaiah 12:2-6. **Friday** (commemoration of John of the Cross, renewer of the church, 1591) Amos 8:4-12. **Saturday** Amos 9:8-15. **Third Sunday of Advent** Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18.

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Comfort all who hurt, life-giving God. Wrap them in your tender care. Remember the forgotten and send us out to share your love with them. Be with the wandering, the worried, and the woeful (*especially*). Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Bless this congregation, life-giving God. Give strength and joy to worship leaders, musicians, and our altar guild as they prepare the way for the celebration of the Christ child's coming among us. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

We remember the generations who have shown us your faithfulness, life-giving God. Shine your light on those who mourn and prepare us for that day when we will see you face-to-face. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Confident that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we bring to you these prayers and those unspoken, in the name of Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
**Amen.**