

ZECHARIAH'S SONG

OPENING PRAYER

O Lord, open our lips;
And our mouth
shall show forth your praise

O God, make speed to save us
O Lord
Make haste to help us

Glory be to the father,
and to the son,
and to the holy spirit

As it was in the beginning
Is now and ever shall be
World without end

Amen.



Heavenly Father,
fill our hearts with the joy
that comes from knowing your love.

May we rejoice
in the good news of salvation
and share that joy with others
during this season of Advent.

Amen.



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PSALM 130

1 From the deep water I cry out to you, O Lord.

2 O Lord, listen to me!
Pay attention to my plea for mercy!

3 If you, O Lord, were to keep track of sins,
O Lord, who could stand before you?

4 But you are willing to forgive, so that you might be honored.

5 I rely on the Lord, I rely on him with my whole being;
I wait for his assuring word.

6 I yearn for the Lord, more than watchmen do for the morning,
yes, more than watchmen do for the morning.

7 O Israel, hope in the Lord, for the Lord exhibits loyal love,
and is more than willing to deliver.

8 He will deliver Israel from all the consequences of their sins.

EXODUS 34:1-8

The Lord said to Moses, "Cut out two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you smashed. 2 Be prepared in the morning, and go up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and station yourself for me there on the top of the mountain.

...

CONFESSION

Father in heaven,
we thank you for the freedom
you have given us
through the life, death
and resurrection of your Son.

But we confess today that we often
live like slaves.

Instead of
living like you delight in us,
we avoid you in shame and guilt.

Instead of
receiving your favor as a gift,
we try to earn it with our efforts.

Instead of
accepting your freedom,
we prefer our chains.

Instead of
pursuing your purposes, we cling
to our short-sighted agendas.

Forgive us. Embrace us.
Cleanse us. Heal us.
We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.



Gracious God,
our sins are too heavy to carry,
too real to hide,
and too deep to undo.

Forgive what our lips
tremble to name,
what our hearts can no longer bear,
and what has become for us
a consuming fire of judgment.

Set us free
from a past that we cannot change;
open to us a future
in which we can be changed;
and grant us grace
to grow more and more
in your likeness and image,
through Jesus Christ,
the light of the world.
Amen.

5 The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the Lord by name. 6 The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed: "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness, 7 keeping loyal love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But he by no means leaves the guilty unpunished, responding to the transgression of fathers by dealing with children and children's children, to the third and fourth generation."

8 Moses quickly bowed to the ground and worshiped 9 and said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, let my Lord go among us, for we are a stiff-necked people; pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance." ...

ISAIAH 40:3-5

3 A voice cries out,
"In the wilderness clear a way for the Lord;
build a level road through the rift valley for our God.

4 Every valley must be elevated,
and every mountain and hill leveled.
The rough terrain will become a level plain,
the rugged landscape a wide valley.

5 The splendor of the Lord will be revealed,
and all people will see it at the same time.
For the Lord has decreed it."

...

JEREMIAH 31:31-34

31 "Indeed, a time is coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. 32 It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I delivered them from Egypt. For they violated that covenant, even though I was like a faithful husband to them," says the Lord. 33 "But I will make a new covenant with the whole nation of Israel after I plant them back in the land," says the Lord. "I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. I will be their God and they will be my

THANKSGIVING & INTERCESSION

Brothers and sisters,
as we joyfully await the glorious
coming of the Christ,
let us pray for the needs
of the church, our community,
and the world.



Pause here to note and pray for:
- personal concerns - prayer for family - friends
and neighbors - church leaders - community &
government - thanksgiving & praise

Concluding with:



God of promise,
you have given us
a sign of your love
through the gift of Jesus Christ,
our Savior,
who was promised from ages past.

We believe as Joseph did
the message of your presence
whispered by an angel,
and offer our prayers for your world,
confident of your care and mercy
for all creation.

Amen.

people. 34 "People will no longer need to teach their neighbors and relatives to know me. For all of them, from the least important to the most important, will know me," says the Lord. "For I will forgive their sin and will no longer call to mind the wrong they have done."

LUKE 1:57-80

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to have her baby, and she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they wanted to name him Zechariah after his father. 60 But his mother replied, "No! He must be named John." 61 They said to her, "But none of your relatives bears this name." 62 So they made signs to the baby's father, inquiring what he wanted to name his son. 63 He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they were all amazed. 64 Immediately Zechariah's mouth was opened and his tongue released, and he spoke, blessing God. 65 All their neighbors were filled with fear, and throughout the entire hill country of Judea all these things were talked about. 66 All who heard these things kept them in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the Lord's hand was indeed with him.

67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
because he has come to help and has redeemed his people.

69 For he has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets
from long ago,

71 that we should be saved from our enemies,
and from the hand of all who hate us.

72 He has done this to show mercy to our ancestors,
and to remember his holy covenant—

73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham.

This oath grants

74 that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies,

THE 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,
for ever and ever.
Amen.



COLLECT (CLOSING PRAYER)

God of all ages,
in the birth of Christ
your boundless love for your people
shattered the power of darkness.

Be born in us
with that same love and light,
that our song may blend
with all the choirs of heaven and earth
to the glory of your holy name.

Amen.



May the God of hope fill you
with all joy and peace in believing,
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit
you may abound in hope.
Amen

may serve him without fear,
75 in holiness and righteousness before him for as long as we live.

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High.

For you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
77 to give his people knowledge of salvation through the
forgiveness of their sins.

78 Because of our God's tender mercy
the dawn will break upon us from on high
79 to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace."

80 And the child kept growing and becoming strong in spirit, and
he was in the wilderness until the day he was revealed to Israel.

JOHN 3:16-21 & 14:1-27

3:16 For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him. **18** The one who believes in him is not condemned. The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. **19** Now this is the basis for judging: that the light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. **20** For everyone who does evil deeds hates the light and does not come to the light, so that their deeds will not be exposed. **21** But the one who practices the truth comes to the light, so that it may be plainly evident that his deeds have been done in God.

14:1 "Do not let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God; believe also in me. **2** There are many dwelling places in my Father's house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you. **3** And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too. **4** And you know the way where I am going."

LISTEN

Your Love

-Blessing Offer, Todd Clark, 2022

Agnus Dei

-Poor Clair Sisters Arundel, 2020

This Is The Gospel

- Joel Barnes, Tiffany Hudson, 2023



REFLECT



Birth of John the Baptist

-Artemisia Gentileschi, 1635



John The Baptist Preaching

-Domenico Ghirlandaio, 1490

-[commentary on artwork](#)

5 Thomas said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus replied, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you have known me, you will know my Father too. And from now on you do know him and have seen him."

...

15 "If you love me, you will obey my commandments. 16 Then I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he resides with you and will be in you.

18 "I will not abandon you as orphans, I will come to you. 19 In a little while the world will not see me any longer, but you will see me; because I live, you will live too. 20 You will know at that time that I am in my Father and you are in me and I am in you. 21 The person who has my commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will reveal myself to him."

...

27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be distressed or lacking in courage...

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. 16 I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he will grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, 17 that Christ will dwell in your hearts through faith, so that, because you have been rooted and grounded in love, 18 you will be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and thus to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you will be filled up to all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who by the power that is working within us is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think, 21 to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.



READ

What ways did you choose to read the text this week?

☐ read the pdf ☐ listen to audio ☐ read aloud

Summarize the reading. Where do you see the theme of hope in the text?

REFLECT

How did you choose to reflect this week?

☐ Art ☐ Music ☐ Journal/Discussion

What stood out to you from the reading and reflection this week? What did you notice about God, yourself, or the world?

What are you curious about? What questions, ideas, or texts would you like to explore more?

RESPOND

How will you respond to the text?

☐ Pray ☐ Worship ☐ Repent ☐ Act

What would it look like for you to respond this week?

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THE SONGS OF THE FIRST CHRISTMAS



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