

Festival of Lessons and Carols

St. James Episcopal Church

December 24, 2020

Christmas Eve!

Bidding Prayer

Presider:

Dear People of God: In the season of Advent, it is our responsibility and joy to prepare ourselves to hear once more the message of the Angels, to go to Bethlehem and see the Son of God lying in a manger.

Let us hear and heed in Holy Scripture the story of God's loving purpose from the time of our rebellion against him until the glorious redemption brought to us by his holy Child Jesus, and let us look forward to the yearly remembrance of his birth with hymns and songs of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of his whole world, for peace and justice on earth, for the unity and mission of the Church for which he died, and especially for his Church in our country and in this city. And because he particularly loves them, let us remember in his name the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed, the sick and those who mourn, the lonely and unloved, the aged and little children, as well as all those who do not know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, let us remember before God his pure and lowly Mother, and that whole multitude which no one can

number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in Jesus, we are one for evermore.

And now, to gather all these petitions, let us pray in the words which Christ himself has taught us, saying:

ALL

**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 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.**

Presider:

The Almighty God bless us with his grace; Christ give us the joys of everlasting life; and to the fellowship of the citizens above may the King of Angels bring us all. Amen.

A reading from the Book of Isaiah
Isaiah 40:1-10

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³ A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵ Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

⁶ A voice says, “Cry out!”
And I said, “What shall I cry?”

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;^[a]
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,^[b]
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
“Here is your God!”
¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Hymn 79

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the ever lasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary; and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of
wondering love.

O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on
earth.

A reading from the book of Isaiah

Isaiah 11:1-9

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

²The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;

⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's
den.

⁹They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;

for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

The Snow Lay on the Ground

Hymn 110

The snow lay on the ground, the stars shone bright,
When Christ our Lord was born on Christmas night.
Venite adoremus Dominum. Venite adoremus Dominum.
Venite adoremus Dominum. Venite adoremus Dominum.

'Twas Mary, daughter pure of holy Anne,
that brought into this world the God made man.
She laid him in a stall at Bethlehem; the ass and oxen shared
the roof with them.
Venite adoremus Dominum. Venite adoremus Dominum.
Venite adoremus Dominum. Venite adoremus Dominum.

A reading from the book of Isaiah
Isaiah 65:17-25

¹⁷ For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.

¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating;
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,
and its people as a delight.

¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem,

and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,
or the cry of distress.

²⁰No more shall there be in it
an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;
for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a
youth,
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered
accursed.

²¹They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

²²They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

²³They shall not labor in vain,
or bear children for calamity;^[a]
for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD—
and their descendants as well.

²⁴Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.

²⁵The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!

They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
says the LORD.

Hark! The herald angels sing glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim Christ is born in Bethlehem!
Hark! The herald angels sing glory to the newborn King!

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting
Lord;
Late in time behold him come, off spring of the Virgin's
womb.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity.
Please as man with us to dwell; Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing glory to the newborn King!

Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Risen with healing in his wings, light and life to all he brings,
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness! Hail, the heaven-born
Prince of Peace!

Hark! The herald angels sing glory to the newborn King!

Presider May Almighty God, by whose providence our
Savior Christ came among us in great humility,
sanctify you with the light of his blessing and set
you free from all sin.

People Amen!