

The Lord Almighty grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end. Amen.

Leader: Our help is in the Name of the Lord;

People: The maker of heaven and earth.

Collect for Advent

Leader: Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever.

Amen.

Let us confess our sins to God and our Neighbor:

God of all mercy,

**we confess that we have sinned against you,
opposing your will in our lives.**

**We have denied your goodness in each other,
in ourselves, and in the world you have created.**

**We repent of the evil that enslaves us,
the evil we have done,
and the evil done on our behalf.**

**Forgive, restore, and strengthen us
through our Savior Jesus Christ,
that we may abide in your love
and serve only your will. Amen.**

*Leader: May the Almighty God grant us forgiveness of all our sins,
and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Leader: O God, make speed to save us.

People: O Lord, make haste to help us.

People: Praise to the holy and undivided Trinity, one God: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The Lord has taken away the judgments
against you,
he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.

¹⁷ The Lord, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing

¹⁸ as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach
for it.

¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.

And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.

²⁰ At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the Lord.

Leader: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

People: Thanks be to God.

Meditation- Practicing the Way of Love

Leader: Practicing the Way begins with *remembering*. Zephaniah makes two points to remember. First, remember all that God does to protect us from harm and oppressors. Second, remember the spiritual gift of joy—to “sing aloud” and “rejoice and exult.”

Note that Zephaniah used more than double the verses to recite God’s grace toward humanity than to tell us to be joyful. Was it because Zephaniah doubted that humans would *believe* in God’s grace if they didn’t have more words to commend God’s graciousness?

Practicing the Way and its attendant actions are about the *embodiment* of being followers of Jesus—of embodying the hope we find in Jesus Christ. We share the Good News of God in

Christ because it is good news that is too life-saving to keep secret from our fellow humans. We Christians strive to be the carriers and advocates of the hope found in Christ because its all-loving, incarnational perspective aligns us with God's command to love God and love our neighbors.

Zephaniah reminds us to *remember* to be joyful in our sharing the hope that Christ brings us. Zephaniah tells us to "sing aloud" and to rejoice and exult. Practicing the spiritual gift of embodying joy enhances our advocacy of hope in Christ.

Remember, says Zephaniah, to be joyful because of everything that God does for us. — Lelanda Lee

V. Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit;

***R.* For you have redeemed me, O Lord, O God of truth.**

V. Keep us, O Lord, as the apple of your eye;

***R.* Hide us under the shadow of your wings.**

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

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.

Leader: Lord, hear our prayer;

People: And let our cry come to you.

Leader: Let us pray. Be present, O merciful God, and protect us through the hours of this night, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in your eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

Prayers of Petition for Our Families Friends and Neighbors

Leader: Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping; that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.

**People: Light of the world, in grace and beauty,
mirror of God's eternal face,
transparent flame of love's free duty,
You bring salvation to our human race.⁵**

Leader: We recall the times we have struggled to practice your Way of Love and yet we continue to joyfully walk on the journey you set before us.

People: Sacred Mystery, visit us and fill us with your Spirit. Bring your good news to life within us. Give us courage to walk in the way of the beloved community that you set before us. Amen.⁶

The Song of Simeon *Nunc dimittis*

Luke 2:29-32

Lord, you now have set your servant free *
to go in peace as you have promised;

For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, *
whom you have prepared for all the world to see:

A Light to enlighten the nations, *
and the glory of your people Israel.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Leader: Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping; that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us. Amen.

About this service:

Lelanda Lee is a writer, poet, and church and community leader, who lives in northern Colorado.... Raised in a refugee-immigrant Asian family in Detroit, Michigan,... Lelanda Lee, a lay leader from the Diocese of Colorado, was a delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in 2015. She served on the Episcopal Church's Executive Council (2009-2015) and as Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Advocacy and Networking for Mission (2012-2015). An EfM (Education for Ministry) 1999 graduate, she blogs for Emerging Voices on Patheos.com and at her blog, What a Cup of Tea.

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