



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

FIRST READING: Micah 5:2-5a

A reading from Micah.

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;

⁵and he shall be the one of peace.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

PSALMODY: Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 80:1-7

SECOND READING: Hebrews 10:5-10

A reading from Hebrews.

⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said,

‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God’
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me).”

FIRST READING *Micah = MY-kuh Ephrathah = EF-ruh-thuh*

This famous little passage from Micah says to the church, “It’s beginning to feel a lot like Christmas.” It is a kind of poetic tribute to Bethlehem and Ephrathah (the clan from which King David came) and to the rule of the promised shepherd king. Verse 3 is the tricky verse in the sequence. It means that God will surrender the chosen people to judgment until the day of the birth of the promised one, at which time all of the children of Israel will be reunited. The reading needs to ring out a holy and certain hope.

SECOND READING

Verse 10 summarizes the whole point of the lesson. All the other verses logically lead to it. The text has

⁸When he said above,
“You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings
and burnt offerings and sin offerings”
(these are offered according to the law),
⁹then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.”
He abolishes the first in order to establish the second.
¹⁰And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified
through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

GOSPEL: Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]

The holy gospel according to Luke.

³⁹In those days Mary set out
and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country,
⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.
⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb.
And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit
⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry,
“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
⁴³And why has this happened to me,
that the mother of my Lord comes to me?
⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting,
the child in my womb leaped for joy.
⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed
that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

[⁴⁶And Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ▶

an instructional tone to it. Help the hearer follow the logic, step by step, to discover God’s will that is our sanctification “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

GOSPEL *Zechariah = zek-uh-RY-uh*

“Faith comes by hearing.” Here, as throughout the church’s year, do not shortchange the faithful. Give them all the word the lectionary affords. Read the whole gospel. It represents a significant part of the reason the people of God have assembled. That being said, a musical setting of the song of Mary (preferably not paraphrased) could present the second part of this gospel.

⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”]

The gospel of the Lord.