

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 22

The Collect and Psalms will be read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer
The Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel will be read from The Easy to Read Version Bible.

The Collect: Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Micah 5:2-5a

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,

are the smallest town in Judah.

Your family is almost too small to count,

but the "Ruler of Israel" will come from you to rule for me.

His beginnings] are from ancient times,

from long, long ago.

3 The Lord will let his people be defeated

until the woman gives birth to her child, the promised king.

Then the rest of his brothers will come back

to join the people of Israel.

4 He will begin to rule Israel in the power of the Lord.

Like a shepherd, he will lead his people in the wonderful name of the Lord his God.

And they will live in safety

because then his greatness will be known all over the world.

5 He will bring a time of peace.

Yes, the Assyrian army will come into our country

and march through our land.]

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Psalm: Canticle 15 — The Song of Mary or Psalm 80:1-7

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; *
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him *
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, *
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, *
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, *
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel, *
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
The promise he made to our fathers, *
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Or

Psalm 80 1 - 7

1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

2 In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, *
stir up your strength and come to help us.

3 Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

4 O Lord God of hosts, *
how long will you be angered
despite the prayers of your people?

5 You have fed them with the bread of tears; *
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
6 You have made us the derision of our neighbors, *
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
7 Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Epistle: Hebrews 10:5-10

5 So when Christ came into the world he said,
“You don’t want sacrifices and offerings,
but you have prepared a body for me.
6 You are not pleased with the sacrifices of animals killed and burned
or with offerings to take away sins.
7 Then I said, ‘Here I am, God.
It is written about me in the book of the law.
I have come to do what you want.’”

8 Christ first said, “You don’t want sacrifices and offerings. You are not pleased with animals killed and burned or with sacrifices to take away sin.” (These are all sacrifices that the law commands.) 9 Then he said, “Here I am, God. I have come to do what you want.” So God ends that first system of sacrifices and starts his new way. 10 Jesus Christ did the things God wanted him to do. And because of that, we are made holy through the sacrifice of Christ’s body. Christ made that sacrifice one time—enough for all time.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: Luke 1:39-55

39 Mary got up and went quickly to a town in the hill country of Judea. 40 She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the unborn baby inside her jumped, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit.

42 In a loud voice she said to Mary, “God has blessed you more than any other woman. And God has blessed the baby you will have. 43 You are the mother of my Lord, and you have come to me! Why has something so good happened to me? 44 When I heard your voice, the baby inside me jumped with joy. 45 Great blessings are yours because you believed what the Lord said to you! You believed this would happen.”

46 Then Mary said,

“I praise the Lord with all my heart.

47 I am very happy because God is my Savior.

48 I am not important,

but he has shown his care for me, his lowly servant.

From now until the end of time,

people will remember how much God blessed me.

49 Yes, the Powerful One has done great things for me.

His name is very holy.

50 He always gives mercy

to those who worship him.

51 He reached out his arm and showed his power.

He scattered those who are proud and think great things about themselves.

52 He brought down rulers from their thrones

and raised up the humble people.

53 He filled the hungry with good things,

but he sent the rich away with nothing.

54 God has helped Israel—the people he chose to serve him.

He did not forget his promise to give us his mercy.

55 He has done what he promised to our ancestors,

to Abraham and his children forever.”

The Gospel of the Lord

On December 22 we celebrate the life of Charlotte Diggs (Lottie) Moon, Missionary in China. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

Born in Virginia in 1840, Charlotte Diggs (Lottie) Moon was the child of pious and affluent Baptist parents. Precocious in schooling, she received an MA in Classics, thereby earning one of the first graduate degrees awarded a woman in the South. She had a gift for languages, learning first the biblical and Romance languages—and then later, and famously, Mandarin.

Lottie Moon's piety lagged behind her learning, and through her teens she remained indifferent to her Baptist heritage. During a revival at age eighteen, she experienced a powerful conversion and devoted the rest of her life to Christ.

After college, Moon taught school in Alabama, Kentucky, and Georgia, one of the few occupations open to educated women in the South. Another vocation became available to her when Southern Baptists began to appoint women as foreign missionaries in 1872, and the following year, at age 33, Moon accepted an appointment in China.

Moon settled in Northern China and continued her work of education for girls. She soon became restless in teaching, and she began evangelizing among adults, particularly women. Her supervisors disapproved of her initiative, but Moon quickly gained credibility because of her ease in relating, woman-to-woman.

Lottie Moon's ceaseless correspondence with Baptist women in the United States, seeking their support and encouraging would-be missionaries, was instrumental in the denomination's burgeoning missionary movement. She appealed to women for a special offering for missionaries at Christmastime in 1887. Her influence led to the formation of the Women's Missionary Union in 1888, which continues the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering as a hallmark of Southern Baptist practice.

On arriving in China, Moon remained aloof from the Chinese, thinking them her cultural inferiors. Over time, however, she found a deep respect for Chinese culture, adopting not only their language but their dress and customs. As she wrote, "It is comparatively easy to

give oneself to mission work, but it is not easy to give oneself to an alien people. Yet the latter is much better and truer work than the former.”

Lottie Moon died on Christmas Eve, 1912.

Let us pray: O God, in Christ Jesus you have brought Good News to those who are far off and to those who are near: We praise you for awakening in your servant Lottie Moon a zeal for your mission and for her faithful witness among the peoples of China. Stir up in us the same desire for your work throughout the world, and give us the grace and means to accomplish it; through the same Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**