

THE  
GOD  
WHO  
SPEAKS

... THROUGH THE  
PROPHETS



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## OPENING RESPONSES

- Reader We gather in the name of the Father:  
**All Whose Creative Word was spoken  
and all Creation came into being.**
- Reader We gather in the name of the Son:  
**All The Word of God made flesh  
who made his home among humans  
to help humans discover the divinity with them.**
- Reader We gather in the name of the Holy Spirit  
**All Who opens our ears to hear the Word of God;  
our minds to know and begin to understand it –  
and our hearts to feel the love of our God  
spoken to us by the God who speaks.**

## LISTENING TO THE WORD OF THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.  
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.  
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
'Be strong, do not fear!  
Here is your God.  
He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.  
He will come and save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;  
the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not travel on it,  
but it shall be for God's people;  
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.  
No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,  
but the redeemed shall walk there.  
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

*Isaiah 35: 1-6, 10*

## REFLECTING TOGETHER

- What images did the Reading conjure up for us?
- Which obstacle seems to resonate with us – as something getting in the way of us living as God wants us to... either as an individual or as a community?
- Who are the people in today's world who feel that they will never be able to return to their homes? And who could behave righteously to make it possible?

## LISTENING WITH THE HEART

Time for personal reflection with the reading and the discussions.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Reader As we close our meeting, let's call to mind some of the ways in which we have heard the God who speaks...

Perhaps there was a word or phrase in the Reading that seemed particularly significant...

Why might it have struck you today?

What does it invite you to take away?

Was there something someone said that seemed to come from God through them?

Was there something you received in the silence?

Who are the people far from home whose plight has been highlighted for you today?

Are you being called to be "righteous" and do something to make their exile more bearable?

How did God speak to you today?

Reader God speaks his Word –  
**All May our ears and hearts be open  
to hear the Voice of the God who speaks.**

Reader God speaks of the power of goodness and righteousness.  
**All May we hear God's Word  
and be willing to act in the cause of justice and of right.**

Reader God speaks of his power to overcome all that might stand in our way.  
**All May we be strong and courageous;  
trusting in the God who goes before us –  
and beckons us on to change the world.**

Reader And may God bless us this night and all nights (*or today and all days*)  
**All The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

Reader And until we meet again, may God hold us in hope in his promises.  
**All Amen.**