

## **January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Fourth Sunday of Epiphany**

### **Introduction to the Day**

*In Deuteronomy God promises to raise up a prophet like Moses, who will speak for God; in Psalm 111 God shows the people the power of God's works. For the church these are ways of pointing to the unique authority people sensed in Jesus' actions and words. We encounter that authority in God's word, around which we gather, the word that trumps any lesser spirit that would claim power over us, freeing us to follow Jesus.*

*After a moment of silent meditation to prepare ourselves for worship, we will begin the liturgy.*

### **Prayers of the People**

As God's beloved people made radiant by the light of Christ, let us pray for the church, the whole human family, and God's good creation.

*A brief silence.*

Your word is truth and life, Holy One, Holy Three. Make your church bold in word and deed so the world will hear and believe the message of your redeeming love. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You are gracious and full of compassion for all living things. Heal the soil, water, and air, so that all your creatures flourish. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Your works are faithfulness and justice. Guide those in authority to seek peaceful solutions to conflicts. Protect the innocent who are caught in the crossfire of ethnic and religious strife. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Your care for the weak gives us strength. We lift to you those who struggle to provide for their families, the vulnerable young, the frail elderly, the homeless, and the sick. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Your love builds up the community of believers. Deepen our care for one another as we reach out to those who are absent for any reason, new to this congregation, or experiencing difficult circumstances. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Holy One, Holy Three, the beloved dead are eternally in communion with you. Give us wisdom to live our days in praise, secure in the knowledge that your faithfulness endures forever. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Holy God, we lift our prayers to you in hope, entrusting all for whom we pray to your great goodness and mercy, made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

**Lector: Please read the introduction, then the citation (i.e.. “The First Reading is from the.... chapter of ...” - then read the text. )**

**First Reading** – *Today’s reading is part of a longer discourse in Deuteronomy, an updating of the law for the Israelite community as the people wait to enter the promised land. Here Moses assures the people that God will continue to guide them through prophets who will proclaim the divine word.*

**Deuteronomy 18:15–20**

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." Then the LORD replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, whoshall speak to them everything that I command. Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak — that prophet shall die."

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM**      Psalm 111

Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,  
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

**Great are your works, O LORD,  
pondered by all who delight in them.**

Majesty and splendor mark your deeds,  
and your righteousness endures forever.

**You cause your wonders to be remembered;  
you are gracious and full of compassion.**

You give food to those who fear you,  
remembering forever your covenant.

**You have shown your people the power of your works  
in giving them the lands of the nations.**

The works of your hands are faithfulness and justice;  
all of your precepts are sure.

**They stand fast forever and ever,  
because they are done in truth and equity.**

You sent redemption to your people  
and commanded your covenant forever;  
holy and awesome is your name.

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
all who practice this have a good understanding.  
God's praise endures forever.**

**Second Reading** - *Paul is concerned about how some Corinthian Christians use their freedom in Christ as license to engage in non-Christian behavior that sets a damaging example to other, impressionable, believers. Christians have a responsibility to each other that their behavior does not cause a sister or brother to sin.*

### **1 Corinthians 8:1–13**

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him. Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "no idol in the world really exists," and that "there is no God but one." Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth — as in fact there are many gods and many lords — yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Food will not bring us close to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat

meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**\* Gospel Reading** - *The story has barely begun, and already the battle is joined. Jesus sides with humanity against every force that would bring death and disease. These forces recognize Jesus and know what his power means for them. This, however, is only the first fight. The war will go on much longer.*

**Mark 1:21–28**

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching — with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**