Worship Resources for November 27, 2016—First Sunday of Advent

Revised Common Lectionary: Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

\*Narrative Lectionary: Daniel’s hope in God, Daniel 6:6-27 (Luke 23:1-5)

\*I accidentally reflected on this passage last week and skipped over Thanksgiving. So below is the same reflection as last week.

Advent! The season of active watching and waiting for the coming of God to enter our world and our lives in a new way! My personal favorite season, today marks the new year of the church!

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the hope of a future reign, in which authority comes from the temple, the home of God, rather than the home of the earthly king, and God will be the one who judges over all. When that time comes, peace will come, for there will be no reason to war any longer, for God will reign above and over all.

Psalm 122 is a call to prayer and blessing, giving thanks for the city of Jerusalem, the center of worship and authority. This is where the authority rests, not only upon the throne of David, but upon the throne of God. The psalmist calls for prayers for peace for this city, and in the prayers for peace, the psalmist calls to make peace with one’s relatives and friends, and with all.

Paul says, “Now is the time to wake up,” in Romans 13:11-14. Now is the time to be actively watching and waiting, putting on the armor of light, being ready for God’s return into our world and lives in a new way. Instead of the ways of this world, put on Christ and live as Christ has called us to live, so that we are ready.

In Jesus’ final days before his death, he instructed the disciples at the temple, after some of the disciples had marveled at the large stones and beautiful buildings. Jesus remarks that these things are temporary, and he is asked what the signs will be of his coming and the end of the age. Jesus remarks that no one knows, and that it will happen unexpectedly, and so they are to keep awake. They are to be alert, actively watching and waiting, for Christ will come at an unexpected hour, like a thief in the night.

\*Daniel survives the lion’s den in the Narrative Lectionary selection of Daniel 6:6-27. The leaders did not like Daniel and how close he was to King Darius of Persia, so they set out to trap him by getting the king to issue an edict that anyone who worshiped any deity or person that was not the king would be thrown into the lion’s den. Of course, Daniel is thrown in, because he is faithful, but he is not harmed, because he is faithful. Daniel declares to Darius that angels shut the mouths of the lions and protected him because he stayed faithful to God. Darius is so angry about what happened that he has those leaders who were trying to get Daniel killed thrown in the lion’s den instead.

The end times! Times of war and destruction and rapture! But don’t believe all the hype. Don’t believe everything you read and see, for much of it is entertaining fiction and nothing more. Don’t be lured into a false sense that everything must be coming to an end. Because we are called to actively watch and wait, we are called to live into God’s ways of love, justice, and peace, and we know that there is no chronological time set on these things to happen. Rather, we must help bring the reign of God to be on earth, and be ready at all times, for God will be made known to our world and in our hearts in a new way at an unexpected time.

Call to Worship

The busy-ness of the season is upon us: shopping and decorating and wrapping;

**The Son of Man, the Child of Humanity, is coming at an unexpected hour!**

The world tells us we need to buy more, to give more, to get more;

**Emmanuel, God With Us, is coming at an unexpected hour!**

Society tells us that those who have more will get more, that those who have little will have nothing;

**The babe will be born in the manger, and will enter our world at an unexpected hour!**

Come away from the ways of the world, and prepare the way of the Lord!

**Come, for God is ready to do a new thing.**

**Come, for Christ is entering our world and our lives in a new way!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

We confess that we have worshiped the false idols of the world: wealth, worldly success, fame, power over others. We confess that we have desired these things more than You, O God who came to us as a little helpless, homeless child, born in a stable. We confess that we try to justify our ways over Your ways. Forgive us, O God, for seeking the temples and sanctuaries of this world that will crumble and disappear. Forgive us, O God, for seeking the things that will trap us and ensnare us. Lead us into Your way of love, a love that frees us from the temporary restraints of the world, and leads to eternal life, justice, and peace. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

Arise, shine, your light is coming! Arise, shine, the light of the world is in you! Arise, shine, be the light of change you wish to see in the world. Arise, shine, knowing that God has forgiven you, loves you, and restores you. Arise, shine, and share the Light of the World. Amen.

Prayer

In this season of darkness, God who created Light, may we sit in the darkness. May we sit in solidarity with those for whom there is little hope, joy, peace, or love. May we sit in the darkness as we remember those who are in prison. May we sit in the darkness as we think of those who have no homes. May we sit in the darkness as we sit with those who have experienced hate because of the color of their skin, because of the language they speak, the way they worship, or the clothing they wear. May we sit in the darkness, as You, once long ago, cried out in the darkness of the night of Your birth. May we cry out, and may we remember that this is a season of waiting. Hope, joy, peace, and love will come, but they are not here yet. We must actively watch and wait. May we do so, knowing that You are also waiting with us in the darkness, waiting for Your light to shine through us and in our world in a new way. Amen.