



WEPC Lectionary Project: *Union with Christ*

West End Presbyterian Church is using the Scripture readings recommended by the Revised Common Lectionary as a framework for our corporate worship and our personal and family devotion. This project is part of WEPC's 25th Anniversary Year and will run from December 2018 through December 2019. The Lectionary gives us access to the whole counsel of Scripture and these texts are a means for us to grow in our understanding of our union with Christ.

To learn more and subscribe to a daily email of Daily Scripture Readings, visit www.wepc.org/lectionary.

Sunday, December 15, 2019

Third Sunday of Advent

[Isaiah 35:1-10](#)

[Psalm 146:5-10](#) *The LORD will Reign Forever*

[James 5:7-10](#) *Patience*

[Matthew 11:2-11](#) *My Messenger*

Monday, December 16

[Psalm 42](#) *I Shall Again Praise Him*

[Isaiah 29:17-24](#) *A Very Little While*

[Acts 5:12-16](#) *Signs & Wonders*

Tuesday, December 17

[Psalm 42](#) *I Shall Again Praise Him*

[Ezekiel 47:1-12](#) *Wherever the River Goes*

[Jude 1:17-25](#) *Waiting for the Mercy*

Wednesday, December 18

[Psalm 42](#) *I Shall Again Praise Him*

[Zechariah 8:1-17](#) *In the Midst*

[Matthew 8:14-17, 28-34](#) *He Took our Illnesses*

Thursday, December 19

[Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19](#) *Restore Us*

[II Samuel 7:1-17](#) *Established Forever*

[Galatians 3:23-29](#) *Faith Has Come*

Friday, December 20

[Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19](#) *Restore Us*

[II Samuel 7:18-22](#) *None Like You*

[Galatians 4:1-7](#) *Sons & Heirs*

Saturday, December 21

[Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19](#) *Restore Us*

[II Samuel 7:23-29](#) *Concerning His House*

[John 3:31-36](#) *From Above*

A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families for the week of December 15, 2019

Shall Return

This week, Pastor Steve Shelby preached from [Isaiah 35:1-10](#).

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the
crocus;
² 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.
³ Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
⁴ Say to those who have an anxious heart,
"Be strong; fear not!
Behold, your God
will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.
He will come and save you."
⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.
For waters break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
⁸ And a highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over it.
It shall belong to those who walk on the way;
even if they are fools, they shall not go
astray.
⁹ 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.
¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

- There should be a clear contrast in our Gospel reading and the Scripture text I just read. On the one hand you have a vivid picture of the blessings of the coming Messiah to a downtrodden and displaced people, and on the other a great and good man rots in prison. In fact Jesus uses part of this text from Isaiah 35 to answer John's question. Yes, Jesus is saying, the messianic kingdom is here and is coming true in my ministry.
- Nevertheless, it is quite an odd response.
- Yes, it is true that Jesus healed the sick, and gave sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf. But how many?
- So we have to say this is a bit ambiguous-- particularly to a man in prison. In fact much of the work of the Kingdom coming and advancing in our world actually has a hidden quality about it.
- How would you know the Kingdom of God was here and advancing? How did the people in Jesus' day see it? In fact given the suffering of what Paul calls "this present evil age", it still seems hidden. But it is here, and it is advancing.
- When we pray "Your Kingdom come", what are we asking for?
- We want God to make His healing reign more tangible and visible in our world. We want the righteous rule of Jesus to be asserted everywhere sin and sickness is found in the world and in me.
- "No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground".
- And so we pray and seek and acknowledge that God's Kingdom is not yet visible in the way we or John the Baptist would desire.
- God's reign is like a "mustard seed, when sown into the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all the shrubs"
- God's reign is like "yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until it was all leavened"
- God's rule is breaking into the world, but it might not meet our expectations.
- Jesus is often not who or what we expect, or maybe even desire.
- "But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs." (*George Eliot*)

To hear sermons and access past study guides visit www.wepc.org/archivedsermons
Questions? Contact Pastor Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org