

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



December 23, 2018

THE LESSON Micah 5:2-5a

²As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, though you are the least significant of Judah's forces, one who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf will come out from you. His origin is from remote times, from ancient days. ³Therefore, he will give them up until the time when she who is

in labor gives birth. The rest of his kin will return to the people of Israel. ⁴He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. They will dwell secure, because he will surely become great throughout the earth; ^{5a}he will become one of peace.

THE RESPONSE Psalm 80:1-7

Shepherd of Israel, listen!

You, the one who leads Joseph as if he were a sheep.

You, who are enthroned upon the winged heavenly creatures.

Show yourself ³before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manassah!

Wake up your power!

Come to save us!

³Restore us, God!

Make your face shine so that we can be saved!

¹LORD God of heavenly forces, how long will you fume against your people's prayer?

³You've fed them bread made of tears; you've given them tears to drink three times over!

⁴You've put us at odds with our neighbors; our enemies make fun of us.

⁷Restore us, God of heavenly forces! Make your face shine so that we can be saved!

THE EPISTLE Hebrews 10:5-10

⁵Therefore, when he comes into the world he says,

You didn't want a sacrifice or an offering,

but you prepared a body for me;

"you weren't pleased with entirely burned offerings or a sin offering."

⁷So then I said,

"Look, I've come to do your will, God."

This has been written about me in the scroll."

⁷He says above, *You didn't want and you weren't pleased with a sacrifice or an offering or with entirely burned offerings or a purification offering,* which are offered because the Law requires them. ⁹Then he said, *Look, I've come to do your will.* He puts an end to the first to establish the second. ¹⁰We have been made holy by God's will through the offering of Jesus Christ's body once for all.

THE GOSPEL Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)

³⁹Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. ⁴⁰She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. ⁴³Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. ⁴⁵Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her."

⁴⁶ Mary said, "With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

⁴⁷In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

⁴⁸ He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant. Look! From now on, everyone

will consider me highly favored ⁴⁹because the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name. ⁵⁰He shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next, who honors him as God. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations. ⁵²He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed. ⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, ⁵⁵just as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever."

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