

**Lessons for The Third Sunday in Advent**

**December 13, 2015**

Psalm 85 (*Antiphon: v. 2*) ~ *An expression of trust in God's forgiveness and plea for restoration.*

Zephaniah 3:14–20 ~ *When God Himself comes as King, His people will rejoice and celebrate.*

Philippians 4:4–7 ~ *With joyful thanks we await the Lord's return, with His peace filling our lives.*

Luke 7:18–28 (29–35) ~ *Jesus reassured John by pointing out His healing deeds which brought great joy.*

**GATHERING THE TEXTS: A Lift for Heavy Hearts**

Our heavy hearts are lifted by the news that His love overcomes our failures. Zephaniah assured the people of Zion that God, who was always the true King of Israel, would come to set right all those things ruined by earthly kings. In Jesus, we see that our King has come, just as John's messengers were told, for the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, and the poor rejoice. Today our hearts are lifted up with joy and filled with peace as we welcome Christ, our King.

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Lord Jesus, in this Advent season, restore to me the joy of your salvation as you assure me that my sins are forgiven. Let me be a messenger of that joy as I share the reason for this season with others. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** Just as we rejoice in God's good gifts to us, we sorrow at the suffering in our world caused by abuse of power and selfish motives. Christ came as King to heal and restore all things. He uses His people in that task. Redeemed by Him, we show Christ-like kindness to those who need good news.

**OFFERING PRAYER:** Our hearts are filled with joy today,  
For Christ our King sets all things right!  
With healing power He leads the way!  
Lord, bless these gifts with righteous might.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** There is so much going on in our lives that would keep God at a distance. How can we rejoice at God's coming when His presence is a threat? Instead of rejoicing, we are easily offended by any implication of our wrong-doing! But God will not let our attitude, or our sins, keep Him away! He comes to us with His love, as the healing and restoring King, claiming us as His own. His embrace in Christ Jesus sets our hearts at peace, and our souls rejoicing!