Joy and Refugees

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4–9 NRSV
“4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Reflection: Walking Toward Hope Week 3 “Welcoming Asylum Seekers”
“The apostle Paul instructs us to trust God in the face of overwhelming challenges. Asylum seekers do just that when they undertake the long and dangerous journey to seek safety in the United States. In doing so, they also put their faith in us to receive them with the kindness and compassion asked of us by the Lord, for we too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Thought Points:
- Paul’s Undiminished Joy
  - How do you find joy in hard times?
- Paul’s Gratitude of Friendship
  - How can you support your friends going through hard times?

Prayer: Book of Common Worship
“Almighty God, you have made us and all things to serve you. Now prepare the world for your rule. Come quickly to save us, so that wars and violence shall end, and your children may live in peace, honoring one another with justice and love; through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

Hymns: Glory to God Hymnal
- #539 “We Will Go Out with Joy”
- #701 “Lord, Prepare Me” (Sanctuary)

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Las Posadas

**Background Information:** *Book of Common Worship*

“The Christian tradition of Las Posadas (Spanish for “lodging”) dates to the sixteenth century. It is celebrated chiefly in Mexico and among some people of Mexican descent in the United States. Traditionally observed December 16–24, this nine-day festival reflects the nine months of Mary’s pregnancy. Although it began as a Catholic tradition that included a novena (special prayers for nine days), the celebration is now embraced by Protestants with emphasis on the reading of scripture and sharing of carols. Its themes of pilgrimage and hospitality encourage the church to extend welcome to immigrants, refugees, and persons who are homeless.”

**Responsive Reading: Book of Common Worship**

One: “Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in ... and eat with you, and you with me” (Rev. 3:20).

Many: “Our names are Mary and Joseph. We are weary from our travels. Will you give us lodging?”

One: “We don’t care what your name is. We will not let you enter. You are strangers. Let us sleep!”

Many: “He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to his own people, but they did not accept him. But to all who received him and believed in his name he gave power to become children of God” (Jn. 1:10–12).

One: How do we know that we love the Lord and have faith?

Many: If someone is naked and lacks daily food, and you do not supply their needs, what good is that? Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (Jas. 2:15–17).

One: “Enter, Mary and Joseph! Enter, holy pilgrims! We will gladly give you lodging: There is room in our home and room in our hearts.”

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2 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Ministry Unit on Theology and Worship.
3 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Ministry Unit on Theology and Worship.
Scripture Reading 1: Isaiah 9:2–7 (NRSV)

“2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. 3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. 4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. 6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

Scripture Reading 2: Luke 3:7–17 (NRSV)

“7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, ‘You Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’ 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’ 10 And the crowds asked him, ‘What then should we do?’ 11 In reply he said to them, ‘Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.’ 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, ‘Teacher, what should we do?’ 13 He said to them, ‘Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.’ 14 Soldiers also asked him, ‘And we, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.’ 15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, ‘I Baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’”

Reflection: “A Gospel of Hope” Walter Brueggemann

“There is kindness, but there is also justice and righteousness, and we must take care that we do not separate these; that we do not think we can have the one without the other; that we do not choose persons or structures, kindness or justice, because the one who liberates, also cares about, the Christ who fed the hungry and cared for the sick is also the Christ who challenged the Pharisees and the government and had to be executed because he scared too many important people.”

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Reflection Questions:

- What is God calling us to do?
- What are some attainable ways you can further God’s kingdom today?
- What is a long-term goal you want to work on for furthering God’s kingdom?
- How would you feel if you were in the position of Mary or Joseph (or asylum seekers/refugees)? What would you want someone to do for you? How can you now do that for others?
- How can you encourage others to walk this path with you?

Prayer: *Book of Common Worship*

“Almighty God, lead us to walk in the light of your love, following Jesus Christ, who came to visit us with great humility. Help us to welcome others, so that when Christ comes again in glory to judge the living and dead, he will welcome us into his eternal home, where he lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

Hymns: *Glory to God Hymnal*

- #100 “My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout” (*Canticle of Turning*)
- #86 “The People Who Walked in Darkness”

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5 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Ministry Unit on Theology and Worship., *Book of Common Worship.*
Bibliography
