***Introit (Psalm 147)***

P: The Lord lifts-up humble people,

**C: But He throws-down evil people.**

P: Praise the Lord! Truly good to praise our God.

C: A song of praise is good and right.

P: The Lord builds Jerusalem.

**C: He brings-together the lonely people in Israel.**

P: He heals broken hearts

C: And He heals all hurts.

P: The Lord made all the stars

**C: And He gave them names.**

P: Our Lord is great and powerful.

**C: His understanding is above-all.**

**All: Glory give to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, the same as it was in the beginning, is now, and will continue forever. Amen.**

***Prayer for God’s Word***

P: Almighty God, You lifted up Your Son Jesus to all honor and authority. Let Your Holy Spirit teach us to trust Jesus as Lord. Lead us to believe all Your truth. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Jesus lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: (copy) Amen.

The Old Testament lesson is from Ezekiel chapter 18.

 The Lord spoke to me, “Why do you say these words, ‘The fathers ate bitter grapes, but the children get the sour taste in their mouth?’ As I live, you will not say these words again in Israel. All people belong-to Me. The father and the son are mine. The person sinning will die.

 But you say, ‘The Lord’s ways are not right.’ Listen to Me, people of ISRAEL, You think My way is not right? Your ways are not right! Happens a good man stops doing good and begins doing evil, he will die. He dies because of his bad ways. But if a bad person stops sinning, and does good and right, then he will save his life. Why? Because he understands his actions and stops sinning. He will live true; he will not die.

 Still the people of ISRAEL say, ‘The Lord’s ways are not right.’ People of Israel, who is not right? My ways are right. Your ways are not right! ISRAEL, I will use your actions to judge each of you. Repent and give up your sins, or bad deeds will destroy you. Throw-away all sin you did against Me, and get a new heart and a new spirit. People of ISRAEL, why do you want to die? The Lord God says, I don’t enjoy seeing you die. Change from your sins and live.”

This is the word of the Lord.

C: (copy) Thanks give to God.

*There are two New Testament readings, a shorter reading from Philippians 2 and a longer reading from Philippians 2. Choose one.*

*The shorter reading.*

The New Testament lesson is from Philippians chapter 2.

 Does Christ encourage you? Does His love comfort you? Do you have fellowship with the Spirit? Does the Spirit give you kindness and compassion for one-another? Yes! Then make me happy this way. Love each-another and agree with each-another. Work together with one heart and mind and goal.

 Don’t be selfish or proud. Be humble. Think of other people as more important than yourself. Don’t always think-about your own interests. Also think-about other people’s interests.

 Do all things without complaining or arguing. Then you show that you are innocent. You are God’s children and no one can blame you. In this sinful and wicked generation, people see you the same-as lights in the world.

 Hold-on-to the word of life. Then on the day Christ comes, I can be happy because my work was not worthless. Even if your faith is a sacrifice to God, and I give up my life to help you, then I rejoice with all of you. You also should be happy and rejoice with me.

This is the word of the Lord.

C: (copy) Thanks give to God.

*The longer reading.*

The New Testament lesson is from Philippians chapter 2.

 Does Christ encourage you? Does His love comfort you? Do you have fellowship with the Spirit? Does the Spirit give you kindness and compassion for one-another? Yes! Then make me happy this way. Love each-another and agree with each-another. Work together with one heart and mind and goal.

 Don’t be selfish or proud. Be humble. Think of other people as more important than yourself. Don’t always think-about your own interests. Also think-about other people’s interests.

 Think the same-as Christ Jesus thinks. Jesus Himself is true God. But Jesus didn’t boast about that. Jesus made Himself nothing, became a servant, and became human. Jesus became a man, humbled Himself, and obeyed, even obeying, how? He died on a cross. Therefore God lifted-up Jesus to the highest place. God gave Jesus a name above any other name, so everyone should bow to Jesus. Everyone in heaven and on earth should bow to Jesus. Everyone will announce that Jesus Christ is Lord and give glory to God the Father.

 My dear Christians, you always obeyed. When I am with you, you obey. Now when I am gone, you continue to obey. Show your salvation in your lives with fear and trembling. God is working in you, planning and working the same-as He wants.

 Do all things without complaining or arguing. Then you show that you are innocent. You are God’s children and no one can blame you. In this sinful and wicked generation, people see you the same-as lights in the world.

 Hold-on-to the word of life. Then on the day Christ comes, I can be happy because my work was not worthless. Even if your faith is a sacrifice to God, and I give up my life to help you, then I rejoice with all of you. You also should be happy and rejoice with me.

This is the word of the Lord.

C: (copy) Thanks give to God.

*There are two Gospel readings, a shorter reading from Matthew 21 and a longer reading from Matthew 21. Choose one.*

*The shorter reading.*

The Gospel lesson is from Matthew chapter 21.

C: (copy) Glory to You, O Lord.

 Jesus was in the temple teaching. The chief priests and Jewish leaders came to Jesus and asked, “What authority do You have to do these things? Who gave you authority?”

 Jesus answered, “I will ask you a question. If you answer, then I will tell you My authority to do these things. JOHN the BAPTIZER – his baptism was from where? Heaven, or men?”

 The Jewish leaders and priests discussed this. They said, “If we say his baptism was from heaven, then Jesus will ask why we didn’t believe JOHN’S message.”

 “But we can’t say his baptism was from men. We are afraid of all the people, and they think JOHN was a prophet.” They said to Jesus, “We don’t know.”

 Then Jesus said to them, “Then I won’t tell you about My authority to do these things.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: (copy) Praise to You, O Christ.

*The longer reading.*

The Gospel lesson is from Matthew chapter 21.

C: (copy) Glory to You, O Lord.

 Jesus was in the temple teaching. The chief priests and Jewish leaders came to Jesus and asked, “What authority do You have to do these things? Who gave you authority?”

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 “But we can’t say his baptism was from men. We are afraid of all the people, and they think JOHN was a prophet.” They said to Jesus, “We don’t know.”

 Then Jesus said to them, “Then I won’t tell you about My authority to do these things.”

 Jesus asked, “What do you think about this? A man had two sons. He went to the first son and said, ‘Son, go work in the fields today.’ The son said, ‘No.’ But later he changed his mind and went to work. The father went to the second son and told him to go work. The son answered, ‘Yes, I will go.’ But he didn’t go. Which son obeyed the father?”

 They answered, “The first son.”

 Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, tax collectors and prostitutes will enter God’s kingdom before you enter. Because JOHN the BAPTIZER told you the way to life, but you didn’t believe him. The TAX collectors and prostitutes believed him. You saw that happen, but you didn’t change your minds and believe him.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: (copy) Praise to You, O Christ.