**A Service of Worship featuring the prophet, Zephaniah**

**"What hurts the victim most is the not the cruelty of the oppressor but the silence of the bystander."**

**― Elie Wiesel﻿**

**GATHERING AS CHRIST’S CHURCH**

**Call To Worship in Prayer** *from Psalm 143:1, 5-6, 8*

Listen to my prayer, Lord!

    **Because of your faithfulness, hear my requests for mercy!**

**Because of your righteousness, answer me!**

I remember the days long past;

    **I meditate on all your deeds;**

**I contemplate your handiwork.**

I stretch out my hands to you;

    my whole being is like dry dirt, thirsting for you.

**Tell me all about your faithful love come morning time,**

**because I trust you.**

**Show me the way I should go,**

**because I offer my life up to you.**

**Hymn 339 (GTG) Lift Every Voice and Sing**

**Prayer of Confession** *with Zephaniah 2:3, 3:1-5*

Holy God, you are the creator and enactor of justice. It is to you that we come for mercy, for we know you are faithful even when we are not.

Although we have built grand cities with tall buildings and wide streets, they are still cities of sorrow. Our neighborhoods and front porches have given way to our own personal castles.

We try to wall ourselves in so that we may ignore violence, prejudice, and the suffering of others.

We have built our human institutions and systems to try and order our existence. But among those who seek to serve the common good, there are also those who seek only to serve themselves.

Too often our leaders are like roaring lions, who prey on the weak.

Too often our courts of justice are anything but, devouring the poor while letting the rich go free.

Too often even those in the church fail to tell the truth, rebranding the Gospel for their own fame.

*But the LORD is still there in the city,*

*and he does no wrong.*

*Day by day he hands down justice,*

*and he does not fail.*

*But the wicked know no shame.*

Spirit of Truth, open our eyes to see the lies and falseness within and around us. Teach us to speak up in the face of corruption and injustice. Take away our blindness. Break down our walls.

*Seek the LORD, all you humble*

*of the land who practice his justice;*

*seek righteousness;*

*seek humility.*

*Maybe we will be hidden*

*on the day of the LORD’s anger.*

*silent confession*

Amen.

**Assurance Of Forgiveness** Zephaniah 3:17 (NIV

The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. The Lord will take great delight in you; and in love will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

**ENCOUNTERING GOD’S WORD**

**Prayer for Illumination**

God of our Righteousness, we come before you with humble hearts. Let us sit at your feet and hear your Word. Teach us its meaning as it takes hold of our soul. Amen.

**Scripture**  Zephaniah

**Sermon**

**GOING OUT AS CHRIST’S DSCIPLES**

**Offering**

**Prayers of the People**

Gracious and Holy God, your eternal purposes, revealed to us in Jesus Christ, show that your love extends to the ends of the earth, and stretches far beyond our imaginings. We thank you for such expansive love and for the rich variety of ways you make yourself known among us.

We pray for your church, too often afraid of the rich diversity you have designed, too often timid in the proclamation of a gospel that includes real justice before the powers and rulers of this world, too often comfortable with the status quo and willfully ignorant of those harmed by our complacency. Strengthen us in our witness, we pray. Disturb us with the power of the Holy Spirit so that we are emboldened through faith in Jesus Christ to do more than pray for peace. Let us enact peace, demand justice, cry out against inequity and violence until the world is healed and all creation lives in abundant life.

We pray for people in positions of power in our country and throughout the world. May they govern people with justice and compassion, in honor and in truth, repairing what has been broken. Give to all who control economic and military might wisdom to choose the common good over personal or political gain.

We pray for those who have little power, whose voice is not heard, whose need is dismissed. Defend the cause of the poor; deliver those in need; put an end to oppression; and rescue those under the threat of violence or psychological harm.

We pray for those who are seeking you this day or searching for new meaning and purpose in their lives. Guide and direct them in their spiritual journey. Give them the vision to see your signs of promise, the wisdom to discern between what is false and what is true, and courage and curiosity in all their searching.

Finally we pray for those overwhelmed with personal struggles this day: the one bowed down in grief; the one overcome by depression or loneliness; the one who is unemployed or in economic trouble; the one struggling with illness or recovery. We pray for those who are estranged from one another and for all mired in stress and anxiety. Send the light and peace of your presence, O God, and send us too, that we might bear the light of Christ and so bring companionship, compassion, and hope by your grace.

Stretch us, O God; expand the horizons of our lives so that we are able witness the ways you are at work in the world and so join you as true disciples of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

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**The Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn 772 (GTG) Live Into Hope**

**Charge and Benediction**

*a mash-up from Paul's letter to the church in Corinth 16:13; 14:1-3; 15:58*

Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.

Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy. For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands them...On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

The liturgy for this service was put together by Ann Gibbs with resources from Michelle Henrichs (Prayer of Confession, Assurance of Forgiveness and Prayer of Illumination). The prayers of the people is adapted from from the Epiphany of the Lordt, *Feasting on the Word, Liturgies for Year A,* volume 1.