

To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, forever and ever. Amen.

⁶ For thus says the LORD of hosts: “Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷ and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,” says the LORD of hosts. ⁸ “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” says the LORD of hosts. ⁹ “The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,” says the LORD of hosts. “And in this place I will give peace,” says the LORD of hosts.”

Text: Haggai 2:6-9 A 12-17-17 Hebrews 1:1-12 John 1:29-34 Psalm 4 Resp. Ps. 98
Hymns: 706, 95, 94, 105 (1, 5-8)

GOD GIVES US OUR HEART’S DESIRE

Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With th’angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!” (TLH #94:1)

Dear fellow believers in the Christchild,

If God promised to give you whatever you wanted for Christmas, what would you ask for? How about something you would really enjoy, but there’s no way you could afford it? How about having all your bills paid: no credit card payments, no car payments, no mortgage payments – nothing? How about an absolutely clean bill of health for yourself or for someone you love? How about real, lasting peace – no sorrow, no anxiety, no fear, and all people treating each other with love and kindness? Any of these things would be quite a gift.

Our text for this Third Sunday in Advent is from the Old Testament book of Haggai. The Babylonian Captivity had recently ended. After 70 years of exile there, a small remnant of the children of Israel who wanted to had been allowed to return to Jerusalem. The entire city – gates, walls, buildings, and temple – lay in ruins. At first the people were excited, and got busy rebuilding the temple. But due to growing fears, discouragement, and lack of interest, they eventually stopped.

Through His prophet Haggai, the Lord had gotten His people to resume work on the temple. Their numbers were small, their resources were limited, and they had little strength. But the Lord reminded them, literally from the original, “*Mine is the silver, Mine is the gold.*” God would give them the resources and everything else they needed to rebuild His house, and the rest of the city. The people desired lasting peace so they wouldn’t have to go through another Babylonian-type Captivity again. They desired that their beloved city of Jerusalem and temple be rebuilt. They desired to return to the ‘glory days’ when they were a strong, prosperous nation.

Their present reality, however, was far from that. The new temple they were building was noticeably smaller and less glorious in outward appearance than their former temple built under King Solomon. The Lord assured them, *“I will fill this temple with glory.”* The glory of the former temple or the new temple, of a huge cathedral or a small church building, is all the same: God, who is present in His house with His people.

The Lord promised His people, *“The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former.”* God was speaking prophetically of the *“greater glory”* of the New Testament Church when *“the Desire of All Nations”* – the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, would come. The real *“glory”* of God’s people wasn’t a rebuilt Jerusalem and temple, and earthly peace and prosperity. Their real *“glory”* was in the coming Savior. The *“glory”* of the believers during the time of the Old Testament was the Savior who was coming to carry out His Father’s will for our salvation. The *“greater glory”* of us believers in the New Testament is the Savior who has come and has carried out His Father’s will for our salvation.

God called the Messiah *“the Desire of All Nations.”* People long for truth, for meaning and purpose for their life, for happiness, for lasting peace, for love, for a conscience free from guilt, for immortality, and more. All such desires are realized in Jesus Christ, *“the Desire of All Nations.”* As Jesus says, *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”* (Jn. 10:10b, NIV).

God promises, *“In this place”* – in the Christian Church, that is, to everyone who believes in Jesus – *“I will give peace.”* We have peace in knowing that Jesus loves us. We have peace in knowing that through His death on the cross and resurrection Jesus takes all of our sin and guilt away. We have peace in the meaning and purpose Jesus gives to our lives. We have peace in knowing that when we die Jesus will take us to heaven to live with him forever.

Jesus is *“the Desire of All Nations.”* Although Jesus came from the Jewish race as their promised Messiah, He is the Savior of *“all nations.”* The Lord prophesied through Haggai that *“all nations ... shall come to the Desire of All Nations.”* *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (Jn. 3:16).

The Lord prophesied through Haggai that when Jesus was born He would *“shake all nations.”* Outwardly, that isn’t what seemed to happen. Jesus looked like a normal baby. His parents were poor. He was born in a small town in a barn with a feeding trough for His bed. His birth was first announced to shepherds, among the lowest class of their society.

Yet John says that in the baby Jesus we see *“the glory as of the only begotten of the Father”* (Jn. 1:14). Jesus Christ is God. Eternal salvation is found only in Jesus Christ. We’re told that through Jesus God *“[shakes] all nations.”* As Simeon held the baby Jesus he told Mary, *“Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed”* (Lk. 2:34-35). Everyone must confront the reality of who Jesus is. Many people believe in Jesus, but many others reject Him. Jesus says, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me”* (Jn. 14:6). *“He who is not with Me is*

against Me” (Mt. 12:30). A person either believes in Jesus and is going to heaven, or doesn’t believe in Jesus and is going to hell.

Five times in our short text the Lord refers to Himself as “*the Lord of hosts*” – the ruler of His heavenly angels – emphasizing that He is the almighty God. As He has reminded us through His prophet Haggai, the almighty God always keeps His promises to His people.

If God promised to give you whatever you wanted for Christmas, what would you ask for? Anything we could desire for this life can’t last. There is no greater gift our heart can desire than the one God has already given us: His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Hail, the heav’nly Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
 Light and life to all He brings, Ris’n with healing in His wings.
 Mild He leaves His throne on high, Born that man no more may die;
 Born to raise the sons of earth; Born to give them second birth.
 Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

Come, Desire of nations, come, Fix in us Thy humble home;
 Oh, to all Thyself impart, Formed in each believing heart!
 Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;
 Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
 Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!” Amen. (TLH #94:3-4)