



# Church of the Epiphany

## FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Christmas 1 • Cloudcroft, New Mexico • December 29, 2024



### Collect for Christmas I

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, kindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### Readings for Christmas 1

Isaiah 61:10-62:5

Psalms 147:12-20

Galatians 3:23-4:7

John 1:1-18

Good morning! Today's lessons are particularly fitting for the Sunday after Christmas. And they need to be, because unlike most other Sundays, in which the designated lessons change each year through a three-year cycle, the lessons for the Sunday after Christmas never change. We will look at them in a moment, but before I forget, I want to encourage you to make, and keep, a New Year's resolution about daily Scripture reading. One convenient way is with The Daily Bible. If you do not have one but want one, please tell me and you will have one promptly. And along with daily Scripture reading, I encourage you to read and consider the lectionary readings in advance of each Sunday's worship. The list of the readings for the Sundays in the coming year are printed in this Anglican Calendar (we have some for you). For the coming month, the list is always printed in the monthly Newsletter that Nancy so faithfully prepares. The readings are also listed in the Book of Common Prayer and, if you are digitally oriented, the lectionary texts can be found on the ACNA website, [www.anglicanchurch.net](http://www.anglicanchurch.net). So nobody can claim that they didn't know what the lessons were going to be. More importantly, reading the Sunday lessons in advance will foster a more in-depth understanding of each Sunday's sermon, particularly since Pastor Fred and I almost always preach from the lessons. I think you will find that along with a more comprehensive understanding of the lessons comes a richer experience of worship each Sunday. And you will likely learn more about your relationship with God and your relationships with others. So you see, everybody grows closer

and everybody wins!

Now on to today's readings. The Old Testament lesson was from the prophet Isaiah, beginning with verse 10 of chapter 61. Interestingly, verse 1 of Chapter 61 begins the familiar passage Jesus read in the synagogue in his hometown in Nazareth. Remember Luke in chapter 4 of his Gospel states that Jesus opened the scroll and read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted" and so on. You may also remember that Jesus proclaimed that this prophecy was being fulfilled in their hearing. That started a chain of events that almost got Jesus thrown off the cliff by the folks in his own hometown. In today's reading, beginning at verse 10 of chapter 61, Isaiah continued with the prophecy. He was excited because he saw the fulfillment of everything God had promised for His Chosen people and he was celebrating. So he said in v. 10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God . . ." And then in verse 11, he said, ". . . the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations." Isaiah continued his celebration in chapter 62. These were welcome words for a people fresh from the agony and the ignominy of Exile in Babylon. No wonder Isaiah was celebrating!

Similarly, Psalm 147, part of which we read today, celebrated the Kingship of God. It is a marvelous hymn of praise. Any psalm that begins and ends with "Hallelujah" has got to be about a major celebration. Psalm 147 simply overflows with praise. Next, Paul in the New Testament reading from Galatians chapters 3 and 4 explains why believers in Jesus are rejoicing. He talks about the OT law and how everything is better in every way now that faith has come. He uses the illustration of a person who is under a guardian or custodian to show how the people were confined and limited by the OT law. But now they (and we) have been set free, redeemed by the Son of God. We have now received our adoption into God's family. As a result, our relationship with God is radically different - we're now intimate members

of the family, sons and daughters of our heavenly Father, our "Abba." That makes us brothers and sisters of Jesus of Nazareth, and heirs with Him of His eternal kingdom. This new relationship, this reconciliation and restoration, is the fulfillment of all that Isaiah (and a number of others) proclaimed in prophecy.

The really magnificent picture, however, comes in today's Gospel reading. It is the first chapter of the Gospel according to John and is commonly called the Prologue. That's simply because it doesn't get into the narrative of events. John is here introducing Jesus by proclaiming Who He is, Who He has always been, and what His coming to earth in the flesh means to us. This is a passage that bears reading over and over and over again, so that you might indeed read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. In a Sunday service, of course, all we can do is read it once or twice and hit some of the high points.

John begins with the beginning. "In the beginning . . .," he writes. This is the same phrase that opens the Book of Genesis. John is referring to when time began for God's Creation, making it clear that Jesus, the Son of God, is co-eternal with God. He always was, always is, and always will be. Now please note that John refers to Jesus as the "Word." The Greek word translated "word" is "Logos," which has a much broader meaning in Greek than our understanding of its translation as "Word." The Bible dictionary explains that Logos is "a philosophical and theological term and concept; a dynamic principle of reason operating in the world and forming a medium of communion between God and man." From a New Testament perspective, we might want to personalize that a little more and emphasize how Jesus fits in. Remember that in Hebrews 4:12 we are told that ". . . the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword . . ." According to

John, the Word, Logos, Jesus, was with God in the beginning and always was God. Understanding the fullness of the term "Logos" is like understanding the fullness of life in Christ. There is always more to it.

The truth is that we can mine deeply each of the verses in the Gospel reading, all 18 of them. In verses 2 and 3, John tells us that it was through the "Word" that all Creation came to be. In verse 4, we are told that "In Him was life." "Life" is another word with a full and rich meaning as it is used by John. Life is a gift from God. Remember John 10:10, where Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Life in John's Gospel refers to life in Jesus, life with Jesus in us through the Holy Spirit, new life following new birth as children of God. Going on in verse 4, John tells us that, "the life was the light of men." "Light" is another term that overflows with meaning, especially as it is used later in John's Gospel to describe Jesus as "the light of the world" (8:12). Light is then particularly and specifically contrasted with darkness, v. 5, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." When light "shines" in darkness, it drives the darkness away. But of course the darkness returns immediately when the light is extinguished. The darkness is always pressing in against the light, it never takes a day off, the struggle is ongoing and eternal. Yet the light of Christ is all-powerful and, as John says, "the darkness has not overcome it."

The Prologue is so rich that we can easily read through it each day of the Christmas season, paying particular attention to, and perhaps intentionally praying about, each of the key terms that are used. We talked about a few, but there are a number of others.

**V. 12, right** - we have the right - we have been given the right - to become children of God. God, through Jesus, has done all He needs to do and is awaiting our response. We have been given an open invitation. All we need to do to exercise the right is to accept. It is not forced upon us. The door is open for us to walk through if we choose to do

so. When we do we are adopted, and thereby become children of God, brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We find **grace and truth** in vv. 14 and 17. Jesus personifies truth as well as grace. This seems particularly important today when the culture struggles with what truth is and, more pointedly, what is the source of truth. But this struggle has been ongoing. Remember in John 18, verse 38, Pontius Pilate asked Jesus directly, "What is truth?" without realizing that truth was literally staring him in the face. Remember Jesus responding to Andrew's request to show him the Father, John 14:9, Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." Jesus is the fulfillment of all that was promised to Isaiah, of all that was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Moses and to Samuel and to all the Old Testament prophets.

To try to grasp the big picture of what John was trying to do, it may help to think of the Prologue to the Gospel of John like the overture to a symphony, the grand symphony of Creation and Redemption. I have suggested this image before and it still fits. In these first 18 verses, John gives us an overview and gives us the **leitmotif**, the recurring themes and concepts that will echo throughout our process of hearing, reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting all John has to tell us about the fullness of this Jesus and His coming among us. All that we might indeed have life, abundant life in Jesus, so that He might find in our hearts a mansion prepared for Him when He comes again. Come, Lord Jesus! Come!

AMEN

Fr. Frank



**Prayer List - 12/29/24**

Rey de Paz

Rev. John Dixon, Rev. Ken Hanna

Bishop Steven and. Tricia

**Those who need your healing care  
and strength:**

Frank & Carolyn Wilson

Ellie

David Brinkley

Donya Conine; Wayne Conine Jr.

Hannah & Evelyn Conine

Sean Lofland

Benda Williams and Kelle Senye

Mary Espinosa

Chip & Alyssa Taylor and baby

Julius

Rev. Elias Rosales Mendez

Baby, Naomi Jade Dircherl and her

family

Gage

**Those in the Armed Forces:**

Dominick Rankin, US Army, Ft. Bliss, TX

Gabriella Murley, Ft. Bliss, TX

Mason Gregg, Camp Courtney, Okinawa

Creed Napier, US Air Force,

J.W. Grove, US Navy

Nicholas Tran, Joint Base Lewis-McChord,

Shawn Zima, Hong Kong

Wyatt Green, US Navy

**We pray for our Epiphany family:**

Eddie and Karli Aguilar, Bill Sorensen

Brian & Kim Chambers, Matthias Chambers

Mike and Jill Ryan

Scott and Lisa Schwandt

Susan and John Scott

**Old Testament Reading**

**Isaiah 61:10-62:5**

**10**

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;

my soul shall exult in my God,

for he has clothed me with the garments of  
salvation;

he has covered me with the robe of  
righteousness,

as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with  
a beautiful headdress,

and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

**11**

For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,

and as a garden causes what is sown in it to

sprout up,

so the Lord God will cause righteousness and  
praise

to sprout up before all the nations.

**62**

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,

and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,

until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,

and her salvation as a burning torch.

**2**

The nations shall see your righteousness,

and all the kings your glory,

and you shall be called by a new name

that the mouth of the Lord will give.

**3**

You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the  
Lord,

and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

**4**

You shall no more be termed Forsaken,

and your land shall no more be termed

Desolate,

but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,

and your land Married;

for the Lord delights in you,

and your land shall be married.

## Old Testament Reading *continued*

**5**

For as a young man marries a young woman,  
so shall your sons marry you,  
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,  
so shall your God rejoice over you.

### Psalm 147:12-20

12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; \*  
praise your God, O Zion.

13 For he has made strong the bars of your gates \*  
and has blessed your children within you.

14 He makes peace in your borders \*  
and fills you with the finest of wheat.

15 He sends forth his commandment upon the  
earth, \*  
and his word runs very swiftly.

16 He gives snow like wool \*  
and scatters the white frost like ashes.

17 He casts forth his ice like crumbs; \*  
who is able to abide his frost?

18 He sends out his word and melts them; \*  
he blows with his wind, and the waters flow.

19 He declares his word unto Jacob, \*  
his statutes and ordinances unto Israel.

20 He has not dealt so with other nations; \*  
neither have they knowledge of his laws.  
Praise the LORD.

## New Testament Reading

### Galatians 3:23-4:7

**23** Now before faith came, we were held captive  
under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith  
would be revealed. **24** So then,

the law was our guardian until Christ came, in  
order that we might be justified by faith.

**25** But now that faith has come, we are no  
longer under a guardian, **26** for in Christ Jesus  
you are all sons of God, through faith. **27** For  
as many of you as were baptized into Christ  
have put on Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor  
Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is  
no male and female, for you are all one in  
Christ Jesus. **29** And if you are Christ's, then  
you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according  
to promise.

**4/1** I mean that the heir, as long as he is a  
child, is no different from a slave, though he is  
the owner of everything, **2** but he is under  
guardians and managers until the date set by  
his father. **3** In the same way we also, when we  
were children, were enslaved to the  
elementary principles of the world. **4** But when  
the fullness of time had come, God sent forth  
his Son, born of woman, born under the law,  
**5** to redeem those who were under the law, so  
that we might receive adoption as sons. **6** And  
because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit  
of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba!  
Father!" **7** So you are no longer a slave, but a  
son, and if a son, then an heir through God.



## The Holy Gospel

### John 1:1-18

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In him was life, and the life was the light of men. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. **6** There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. **8** He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. **9** The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. **11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. **12** But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, **13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. **14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. **15** (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") **16** For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. **17** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

