



## INTRODUCTIONS

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

### **The First Reading** - Jeremiah 31: 7-14

Scholars tell us that this passage contains ideas not found in Jeremiah's prophecies, but which are very prominent in Isaiah 40-66, the work of an unknown prophet of the exile in Babylon. It promises Israel's return from exile in many foreign lands and the re-establishment of the nation to everyone's joy and prosperity. This redemptive action will result from nothing other than God's gracious goodness.

### **The Psalm** - Psalm 147: 12-20

The second of five Hallelujah psalms which close the Psalter celebrates the special relationship Israel had with God. Its message is summed up in the words of v. 20: "He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his ordinances."

### **The Second Reading** - Ephesians 1: 3-14

In writing to the Colossian congregation threatened by a destructive heresy, Paul opened his letter with some very kind and generous words. He praised them for remaining faithful to the gospel and the Christian way of love as Epaphras had taught them. He prayed that they would continue to grow in their knowledge of God's will and strong in their witness to the faith as they had first received it.

This is still an appropriate message for us who are so easily persuaded by the attitudes and practices of our own culture to adopt some other alternative than the Christian way.

### **The Gospel Reading** - John 1: [1-9], 10-18

## The Second Sunday of Christmas, January 3, 2016

Looking at Jesus from the perspective of perhaps sixty years after his death on the cross, John assessed what the coming of Jesus into the world really meant.

For those who believed in him and accepted the grace and truth now available through Christ, it meant a new life of spiritual power as the children of God. So also it may be for us as we begin a new year of living in God's grace.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Jeremiah%2031:%207-14%0Acw%20Psalm%20147:%2012-20%0AEphesians%201:%203-14%0AJohn%201:%20\[1-9\],%2010-18](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Jeremiah%2031:%207-14%0Acw%20Psalm%20147:%2012-20%0AEphesians%201:%203-14%0AJohn%201:%20[1-9],%2010-18)

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### Collect One

Almighty God,  
who hast poured upon us the new light of thine incarnate Word;  
Grant that the same light, enkindled in our hearts,  
may shine forth in our lives;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### Collect Two

Almighty God,  
in the birth of your Son  
you have poured on us the new light of your incarnate Word,  
and shown us the fullness of your love:  
Help us to walk in this light and dwell in his love  
that we may know the fullness of his joy;  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*Presider or deacon*

As we celebrate with joy the birth of Jesus to Jews, let us offer prayers to God who gathers his sons and daughters in a holy family.

*Deacon or other leader*

By the birth of the timeless Son of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For *N* our bishop and the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

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## The Second Sunday of Christmas, January 3, 2016

For all believers who put their trust in the incarnate Son of God.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority, and for peace and justice.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For the conversion of the whole human race to our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For travelers, for the sick and the suffering, for the hungry and the oppressed, for those in prison, and for the dying and the dead.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

Remembering our most glorious and blessed Virgin Mary, *N*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

God of all families and peoples, accept the prayers we offer in this joyful season. As we welcome this mystery of your love, may we delight in our joy as children and heirs of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### POST COMMUNION

Light eternal,  
you have nourished us in the mystery  
of the body and blood of your Son:  
By your grace keep us ever faithful to your word,  
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

### PRAYERS

O Holy One,  
heavenly angels spoke to earthly shepherds  
and eternity entered time in the child of Bethlehem.  
Through the telling of the Christmas story,  
let our temporal lives be caught up in the eternal  
in that same child,  
that we might join shepherds and all the heavenly host  
in praising the coming of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

God of glory,  
your splendour shines from a manger in Bethlehem,  
where the Light of the world is humbly born  
into the darkness of human night.  
Open our eyes to Christ's presence in the shadows of our world,  
so that we, like him, may become beacons of your justice,  
and defenders of all for whom there is no room. Amen.

Light of life, you came in flesh,  
born into human pain and joy,  
and gave us power to be your children.  
Grant us faith, O Christ, to see your presence among us,  
so that all of creation may sing new songs of gladness  
and walk in the way of peace. Amen.

We bless you, Abba, Father,  
for you have visited your people  
in one like us in all things but sin,  
and in human fragility you have revealed  
the face of divinity.  
Gather into your arms  
all the peoples of the world,  
so that in your embrace  
we may find blessing, peace,  
and the fullness of our inheritance  
as your daughters and sons. Amen.

God has blessed creation with a great variety of gifts  
and gathered all people into one family,  
so that in sharing, we might strengthen  
and be strengthened by one another.  
We gather into our hearts and minds  
the universe entrusted to us,  
remembering its needs before God and this company.

Grant that these prayers, O God,  
may be enfolded by our commitment not only to pray them,  
but to live them in your Son's name. Amen.

Gracious God,  
you have redeemed us through Jesus Christ,  
the first-born of all creation,  
whose birth we celebrate as the child of Bethlehem.  
Bless us with every spiritual blessing,  
that we may live as your adopted children  
and witness to your glory  
with unending praise and thanksgiving. Amen.

## LECTIONARY NOTES 1

**Jeremiah 31:7-14** One of the most obvious revelations of the current Christological debate is the strength of the literalist approach to scripture, even in the mainline churches. Here is a passage which offers an excellent opportunity to discuss in a sensible way, the composite nature of the scriptures as we presently have them and the still valuable spirituality of the message conveyed in the words. God as the gracious providential Protector and Redeemer of Israel IS the story of the Old Testament to which all the priestly, prophetic and poetic voices

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contributed, no matter where they appeared throughout Israel's history. Thus the editors who put together the Book of Jeremiah could include a poem from the later, but unknown, prophet of the Exile among the oracles of the prophet whose ministry ended when Jerusalem was devastated by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

**Psalm 147:12-20** From the temple liturgy for the New Year or the Feast of Tabernacles comes this Hallelujah Chorus celebrating God as the Creator of the universe and Sustainer of Israel. It is believed to have been composed as a liturgical psalm in the early 4th century BC. The influence of the prophetic oracles of the unknown prophet of the Exile (Isaiah 40-66) can be detected in several places.

**Ephesians 1:3-14** John C. Kirby, formerly of McGill University, Montreal, makes a strong case that this prayer at the beginning of Ephesians, "both in language and in form, is patterned after the Jewish berakoth", a prayer of praise and blessing of which there are numerous examples in the Old Testament. He points out that some scholars divide these poetic verses into stanzas having separate themes. OTOH, Kirby suggests that the ideas so tumble over one another as to defy such analysis. He accepts the view of another scholar, Masson, that "the tone of wonder and awe which runs through the whole passage, the slow meditative style, the solemnity of the language, the repetition of the phrase 'to the praise of his glory,' which is the main purpose of all berakoth, show us the origin of this way of approaching God. Thoroughly Christian in content - though many of the ideas have been taken over from Judaism they have been baptized into Christ - it is yet thoroughly Jewish in attitude."

**John 1:10-18** What the gospel meant to John's audience certainly would not be what it may mean to us 1900 years later. He was writing for a Hellenistic culture from a Hebraic perspective.

He chose the word LOGOS to describe Jesus which he may well have drawn from Philo, the Alexandrian Jew steeped in Greek thought who was a contemporary of Jesus and Paul. His emphasis in this passage is to focus attention on both the continuity and the discontinuity between Israel's tradition and that which the Christian gospel was bringing to the Greek-speaking world.

In his "New Testament Words," (Westminster Press, 1974) William Barclay has a helpful comment on the way John used this word as a bridge between the two cultures:

"In Jewish thought we have two great conceptions at the back of the idea of Jesus as the Word, the LOGOS of God. First, God's word is not only speech; it is power. Second, it is impossible to separate the ideas of Word and Wisdom; and it was God's Wisdom which created and permeated the world which God made....

"The idea of a mind, a LOGOS ruling the world fascinated the Greeks... It was the LOGOS which put sense into the world. Further, the mind of man himself was a little portion of this LOGOS.... This conception was brought to its highest peak by Philo, who was an Alexandrian Jew, and who had the aim of joining together in one synthesis the highest thought of Jew and Greek....

"Now we can see what John was doing when he uttered his tremendous statement, 'The Word was made flesh.' (i) He was clothing Christianity in a dress that a Greek could understand.... (ii) He was giving us a new Christology.... (a) Jesus is the creating power of God come to men. He does not only speak the word of knowledge; he is the word of power. He did not come so much to say things to us, as to do things for us. (b) Jesus is the incarnate mind of God. We might well translate John's words, 'The mind of God became a man.'"

## LECTIONARY NOTES 2

*Sojourners* "Living the Word," archives:

["The Great Gatherer."](#) Walter Brueggemann, "Wondrous, Inexplicable, Demanding Newness," 2010.

## SERMON OUTLINE

"Denial ain't just a river in Egypt." – Mark Twain

Sometimes New Testament scholars use the term "typology," meaning the technique of describing New Testament figures in terms of Old Testament characters. Joseph, in the book of Genesis, is a type-model for Joseph, Mary's husband, because God communicates to him in dreams. Moses is a type-model for Jesus because he comes out of Egypt and gives God's law to the people. Jesus in turn in today's story comes back out of Egypt and subsequently has his sermon on his own mount and gives the people the new law of love. Pharaoh is a type-model for Herod because he tried to stifle the whole liberation process. So, who do we choose as our own personal type-model? Are we Pharaoh/Herod concerned about our own arrogant power and prestige no matter who we destroy in our effort to stay on top? Then what do we do with all the bodies, our emotional detritus? Even if we manage to hide all the bodies, we have then denied ourselves and are lost. Are we Joseph/Joseph, people of dreams leading others to safety? Then, even though we speak little, we take people across the river to freedom. Are we Moses/Jesus coming out of Egypt, coming out of darkness, out of slavery, out of the chains others put on us, with no denial of who we are, so that we in turn can take people across the river?

Greek

Matthew 2:13, and elsewhere, has the word "child" referring to Jesus. The word used here in Greek is neuter, neither masculine nor feminine. Interesting. It's like where's the kid? "It's" over there.

## The Second Sunday of Christmas, January 3, 2016

Matthew 2:15 talks about Herod's death. The usual Greek word for death is not used here. The word used actually means "end." The passage is talking about the "end" of Herod. That sounds even more terminal than "death," if that's possible.

<http://preachingtip.com/archives-year-c/christmas-year-c/2-christmas-year-c/>

### ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

["The Fullness of Time,"](#) Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.

<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-fullness-time>

["Christmastide: A Reminder Where Our Hearts Belong,"](#) the Rev. William McCord Thigpen, III, *Day 1*

[http://day1.org/1676-christmastide\\_a\\_reminder\\_where\\_our\\_hearts\\_belong](http://day1.org/1676-christmastide_a_reminder_where_our_hearts_belong)

[Ministry Matters](#) - Posts in the week before

[http://www.ministrymatters.com/bin\\_list/?this\\_sunday=1#axzz2WxzlWvWf](http://www.ministrymatters.com/bin_list/?this_sunday=1#axzz2WxzlWvWf)

### CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](#), Christmas 2, 2016, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown,

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2015/11/year-c-second-sunday-after-christmas.html>

**Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to [churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com) with the message Passwords in the title**