

The Second Sunday of Christmas Year A January 5, 2014

After the lament of last week, it's a bit of a relief to return to joy again this week. The power of celebration, thankfulness and acknowledging the blessings God has poured on us is the focus of the readings this week, and they offer us great cause for both celebration and confession – celebration of God's goodness and grace, and confession of our failure to recognise the goodness we enjoy.

May our worship this week fill us with laughter, praise and celebration, and may we carry God's abundant blessing with us out into the world.

INTRODUCTIONS

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

Jeremiah 31:7-14: God promises to bring a remnant of the people of Israel back to their homeland with joy and celebration, and with assurance of abundant provision for their needs – including the weak, poor and infirm.

OR **Sirach 24:1-12**: Wisdom seeks a place to dwell, and the Creator instructs her to dwell in Israel.

Psalms 147:12-20: An invitation to praise God who controls the snow, the frost and the hail and who has given God's people wisdom and instruction by which they are strengthened and blessed.

OR **Wisdom of Solomon 10:15-21**: Wisdom led God's people out of Egypt and saved them from their enemies, leading them to sing songs of joy and praise.

Ephesians 1:3-14: In Christ God has brought both Jew and Gentile into God's family and given us all an inheritance as God works out God's plan of restoration for all creation through Christ.

John 1:(1-9), 10-18: God's Word made flesh, through whom all things were created, has brought us into a new birth as children of God, has revealed God to us, and has given us an abundance of grace and blessing.

[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 1

Heavenly Father, sometimes the world seems so dark,
all creation groans with the burdens of life and living.
But in Jesus, light has dawned, our King is come.
and we know that our understanding of you and what you want for us has been dim,
But the light is beginning to dawn in our hearts and minds too.
We begin to see your intentions for the world
our intention that new hope should spring from old experience
our intention to save the world

Jesus our King, your rule is one of justice, peace and righteousness,
and so we pray that the rulers of the world may echo your own justice,
so that the oppressed may receive righteousness
and where governments and rulers have chosen tyranny and oppression instead of love
and mercy, we pray for the people who suffer under harsh regimes and those who stand
up for the victims of oppression.

Jesus our King, your rule is one of overflowing generosity and bounty.
We pray for those who are caught in a spiral of ever increasing poverty.
We pray for the hungry, malnourished, homeless, dispossessed
Jesus our King, your rule is one of care for the needy and neglected
we pray for those who are sick in body, mind or spirit for those whose lives are precious to
us, as well as to you.
We pray for...

Jesus our King, your rule is one of glory and blessing
Guide and inspire your church to be a beacon of your light here in and throughout the
world.
Jesus our King, shine your light into our hearts
and fill us with your gifts of forgiveness, peace, joy, love.
Give us life in all its fullness
We pray, in your name, O Christ our Lord and King. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Lamb of God

Lord Jesus, hear our prayer
O Jesus, Lamb of God, we pray for your flock,
for those who are struggling through life

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because they are hungry and don't know where their next meal will come from...
because they are living in the midst of war or civil unrest
and don't know what the future will bring...
because life is harder to cope with than usual at the moment...

Lamb of God

Lord Jesus, hear our prayer

O Jesus, Lamb of God, we pray for your flock,
for those who feel they are outsiders
because they are refugees, speaking a strange language, at the mercy of strangers...
because they are hated by their neighbours due to centuries old rifts and suspicions...
because they feel different from other people in some way - the colour of their skin, their
religious beliefs, the level of their ability...

Lamb of God

Lord Jesus, hear our prayer

O Jesus, Lamb of God, we pray for your flock,
for your lambs
for children who come second in their parents lives and priorities...
for children who are in care...
for children who suffer abuse of any kind...
for children who are seriously ill or dying...

Lamb of God

Lord Jesus, hear our prayer

O Jesus, Lamb of God, we pray for your flock,
for those who are frail and weak,
for those elderly people who feel alone and vulnerable even in their own homes...
for those who mourn the loss of a loved one...
for those who are ill in body, mind or soul...
in particular we pray for.....

Lamb of God

Lord Jesus, hear our prayer

O Jesus, Lamb of God, we pray for your flock,
for those who are called to be your light to the nations...
we pray for your church and ourselves - help us as we do our work of bringing people to
you
Give us courage to witness to your love in our words and actions and in our prayers...

Lamb of God

Lord Jesus, hear our prayer. 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 enfleshed 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.

PRAYERS FOR EPIPHANY

Glory to you, O Champion of all Loves, who for our sake endured the cross, encountered the enemy and tasted death. Glory be to you, O King of all Kings, who for our salvation wrestled with principalities and powers, subdued the forces of hell and won the greatest of all victories. To you be all praise, all glory and all love; now and for ever. Amen. *Thomas Ken, 1637-1711*

Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

When, good Lord, will you manifest yourself to us in bright sunshine? Yes, we are slow to understand and slow to see. But we are quick to believe that if you chose to reveal yourself to us, you could do so this very day. Dear lord, please appear to us, at dawn or at dusk or at the height of the day. Come to our table at mealtimes, that we may share our meals with you. Come to our bed, that we may share our rest with you. Come to our prayers, that we may rejoice and be glad. *Gilbert of Hoyland (d. c. 1170)*

O Source and Centre of all being, grant us the gifts of your grace, that walking in your way and strengthened by your life, we may journey through this world in your peace, and rest in heaven with your saints; and this we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen *Gerhard Tersteegen, 1697-1769*

What is this jewel that so precious? I can see it has been quarried not by men, but by God. It is you, dear Jesus. You have been dug from the rocks of heaven itself to be offered to me as a gift beyond price. You shine in the darkness. Every colour of the rainbow can be seen within you. The whole earth is bathed in your light. Infant Jesus, by being born as man you have taken upon yourself the pain of death. But such a jewel can never be destroyed. You are immortal. And by defying your own death, you shall deliver me from death.

Grant merciful Father, that we may be strengthened in your service. That we might show forth the wonder of your love for us in giving to us yourself in the form of Jesus, the child of

Bethlehem. May our lives so reflect your glorious life of sacrifice, that others may come with us to worship. We offer to you our gifts of loving hearts, obedient service and joyful lives, that your glory might be known among all people. Amen.

Holy Jesus, before your infant form sages bowed the knee and acknowledged your Lordship over all power and wisdom. Grant us also clear vision and courage, that in the light of your light, we may devote our power and potential to your service even when that requires us to go home by another way. Amen. *Church of Scotland*

Almighty and everlasting God, you have revealed the incarnation of your son by the bright shining of a star, which the wise men saw, and offered costly gifts in adoration; let the star of your justice always shine in our hearts; that we may give as our treasure all that we are and all that we possess, to your service; through Jesus Christ our lord. Amen. *Gelasian Sacramentary*

LECTIONARY NOTES

This is a tough Sunday to preach, coming after the Christmas celebrations of this week. The Gospel reading is the slaughter of the children under King Herod. Can you imagine anything less consistent with the “good cheer” of Christmas Day?

But perhaps this is a good thing. Perhaps we need to be reminded that great joy and great suffering exist right beside each other. Perhaps we need to be reminded that even as we celebrate, others grieve, and our celebration is empty and destructive unless we also work to create a reason for the least and most vulnerable among us to celebrate. Perhaps it's good for us to go directly from “Peace on earth and good will to humanity” to the reality of violence, destruction and suffering, so that we can renew our commitment to the Christmas message in the light of the pain of our world, rather than in some celebratory vacuum.

May your worship and preaching today offer a real and robust reason for joy and hope in our broken and hurting world.

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Throughout the readings of this week is the joyous promise of blessing and grace – which is, perhaps, a welcome contrast to last week's weeping and grief. In Jeremiah, the remnant is promised a return with joy and security – God's blessing of provision and comfort. The Psalmist celebrates the God who strengthens and protects God's people and gives them wisdom. In resonance with this Psalm, the apocryphal readings both celebrate the Wisdom which God has caused to dwell with God's people, and which rescues them and leads them to joy and celebration. Paul, in Ephesians, celebrates the blessings and grace which have come to us in Christ, making us part of God's family and ensuring us an eternal inheritance in God's realm. And in the prologue to John's Gospel (which was set for Christmas Day as well – although a slightly shorter section) we are reminded of our birth as children of God in Christ, and of the gracious blessings which we receive through Christ. There is no question that this is a week for celebration – remembering the grace and life we enjoy in Christ, and opening our hearts to God's blessings and wisdom which are sure and sustaining – no matter what we may face in this world.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: An often forgotten task which we are called to as followers of Christ is that of celebration and life-giving. As we challenge injustice and work to bring healing and restoration to our world, celebration can feel like indulgence, and worship can seem like impractical introspection. However, there is tremendous power in recognising goodness and life, in celebrating blessings and wisdom, wherever we may find it – even in those with whom we may generally disagree. And so, as we continue to celebrate the incarnation of Christ, we live this incarnation by acknowledging and affirming the wisdom that is at work in our world, in our leaders and thought-leaders. We live the incarnation by enjoying the blessings we see and experience, and by enabling others to find joy and reason to celebrate even in their struggle. We live the incarnation by embracing all people and welcoming them into the family of God into which we have ourselves been welcomed. As we draw attention to goodness and grace around us, and as we enable ourselves and others to embrace this goodness and grace, our world is gently transformed into a more secure, more blessed and more whole place. If this is not a work of justice – of God’s reign – then I don’t know what is!

LOCAL APPLICATION: It is all too easy in our Churches and faith communities to define ourselves by what we resist, what we denounce, or what we stand against. It is all too easy to make celebration, blessing and enjoyment something that we view as evil and to be shunned, but this is not Gospel living. In every person, in every community, there is goodness, grace and blessing to be found – no matter how tough or painful or unjust our lives may be. This is why slaves could sing of their hope and joy in Christ, and why artists in every oppressive regime have continued to perform, to sing and dance and create. It is a prophetic and liberating act to celebrate in the midst of grief and darkness. It is a prophetic and liberating act to enable people to recognise and embrace the goodness hidden even in their pain. It is a prophetic and liberating act to affirm goodness and wisdom wherever we may find it, and to welcome all people into the celebration. As God’s family, as followers of the incarnate, light-bringing Christ, may we be known for our joy, our hope, our wisdom, our celebration and our enjoyment of whatever blessings we may be able to receive and give. Surely this is a far more Christ-like and healing thing than to be known only for what we oppose and condemn?

SERMON OUTLINE

John 1:10 -18 He was in the world

Part of John’s famous Prologue to his Gospel as he focuses on Christ & his entry into the world...

1. The WORLD 10-13: its failure with regard to Jesus to a) recognise him -was in the world, & the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. b) receive him - 11He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him

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– they considered him a blasphemer – condemned him as a criminal – yet there is good news -12But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

2. The WORD 14a: Jesus - true & living word of God – LOGOS - to the Greek - the principle that controls & governs all things; - - to the Jew – refers to God himself – Creator & Sustainer of humanity and life...

3. The WONDER 14b: that Jesus became flesh and lived among us – ministering in Israel... John is able to proclaim wonderfully: we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. 16From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17The law indeed was given through Moses; grace & truth came through Jesus Christ. 18No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. We too share the wonder of that proclamation as we rejoice in the Good News of the Season - and proclaim Love came down at Christmas..

By Norman Porteus.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

["Feel the Buzz,"](http://day1.org/2537-feel_the_buzz) the Rev. Wendy Porter Cade, *Day 1*
http://day1.org/2537-feel_the_buzz

You're Invited to a Feast - Jeremiah 31:7-14

<http://mattjudkins.com/2009/01/04/youre-invited-to-a-feast-a-sermon-on-jeremiah-317-14/>

CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/11/year-second-sunday-after-christmas.html), Christmas 2, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/11/year-second-sunday-after-christmas.html>

["Storypath Lectionary Links: Connecting Children's Literature with our Faith Story,"](http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links-sunday-january-5-2014/) January 5, 2014, Union Presbyterian Seminary. Connections: Jeremiah 31:7-14 and *Ugly Vegetables* by Grace Lin, Ephesians 1:3-14 and *Big Sister and Little Sister* by Charlotte Zolotow, John 1:(1-9)10-18 and *The Apple Pie that Papa Baked* by Lauren Thompson
<http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links-sunday-january-5-2014/>

["A Star Led the Way,"](http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/lessons/2013/11/10/a-star-led-the-way/) Christmas 2, Lesson Plans that Work, *Episcopal Digital Network*
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/lessons/2013/11/10/a-star-led-the-way/>

["Sermon of the Week."](#) / ["Mensajes para niños."](#) Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Colouring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com. <http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[For All Your Blessings](#)

[For The Beauty Of The Earth](#)

[At The Name Of Jesus](#)

[Joy to the World](#)

[O Little Town Of Bethlehem](#)

[Do You Hear What I Hear](#) (Link to YouTube video)

Brightest and the best

Longing for light

The wise may bring their learning

Thou who wast rich

Mine eyes have seen

Thou didst leave thy throne.

See him lying on a bed of straw

We three kings of orient are

All earth was dark

As with gladness men of old

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning

We three kings

The first Nowell

The race that once

Wise men seeking Jesus