

First Sunday after Christmas Sunday, December 30, 2018

The Collect: Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled 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.**

Old Testament: Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3 read from the Modern English Version Bible

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful 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 with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth her buds, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

For the sake of Zion I will not keep silent, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest until her righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The nations shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. And you shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

The Word of the Lord

Psalm: 147 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 Hallelujah! How good it is to sing praises to our God! * how pleasant it is to honor him with praise!

2 The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem; * he gathers the exiles of Israel.

3 He heals the brokenhearted * and binds up their wounds.

4 He counts the number of the stars * and calls them all by their names.

5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power; * there is no limit to his wisdom.

6 The Lord lifts up the lowly, * but casts the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; * make music to our God upon the harp.
8 He covers the heavens with clouds * and prepares rain for the earth;
9 He makes grass to grow upon the mountains * and green plants to serve mankind.
10 He provides food for flocks and herds * and for the young ravens when they cry.
11 He is not impressed by the might of a horse; * he has no pleasure in the strength of a man;
12 But the Lord has pleasure in those who fear him, * in those who await his gracious favor.
13 Worship the Lord, O Jerusalem; * praise your God, O Zion;
14 For he has strengthened the bars of your gates; * he has blessed your children within you.
15 He has established peace on your borders; * he satisfies you with the finest wheat.
16 He sends out his command to the earth, * and his word runs very swiftly.
17 He gives snow like wool; * he scatters hoarfrost like ashes.
18 He scatters his hail like bread crumbs; * who can stand against his cold?
19 He sends forth his word and melts them; * he blows with his wind, and the waters flow.
20 He declares his word to Jacob, * his statutes and his judgments to Israel.
21 He has not done so to any other nation; * to them he has not revealed his judgments.
Hallelujah!

Epistle: Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7 read from the New American Standard Bible

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: John 1:1-18 read from the New Century Version Bible

In the beginning there was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were made by him, and nothing was made without him. In him there was life, and that life was the light of all people. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overpowered it.

There was a man named John who was sent by God. He came to tell people the truth about the Light so that through him all people could hear about the Light and believe. John was not the Light, but he came to tell people the truth about the Light. The true Light that gives light to all was coming into the world!

The Word was in the world, and the world was made by him, but the world did not know him. He came to the world that was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to all who did accept him and believe in him he gave the right to become children of God. They did not become his children in any human way—by any human parents or human desire. They were born of God.

The Word became a human and lived among us. We saw his glory—the glory that belongs to the only Son of the Father—and he was full of grace and truth. John tells the truth about him and cries out, saying, “This is the One I told you about: ‘The One who comes after me is greater than I am, because he was living before me.’”

Because he was full of grace and truth, from him we all received one gift after another. The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. But God the only Son is very close to the Father, and he has shown us what God is like.

The Gospel of the Lord

The Closing Prayer: On January 4th we remember Elizabeth Seton, Founder of the American Sisters of Charity. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*

Elizabeth Ann Seton was born in New York City on August 28th, 1774. She was the founder of the Sisters of Charity, the first community of sisters established in the United States.

Elizabeth Seton was reared in The Episcopal Church, her family having been loyalists during the American Revolution. From a young age, she desired to aid the sick and poor. In 1795 she married William Seton, and their family came to include five children. During this time she also founded the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children. In 1801, the family business went bankrupt. In 1803, her husband showed the symptoms of tuberculosis, and they set sail for Italy in the hopes that the warm climate would cure his disease. The Italian authorities, fearing yellow fever, quarantined them in a cold stone hospital for the dying. William soon died and left Elizabeth a young widow with five children and few resources. While struggling with these losses, she was befriended by Roman Catholics and, as a result, was drawn to Roman Catholicism.

Returning to New York, she encountered bitter opposition from her Episcopalian family for her new religious leanings. With five children to support, she found herself alone and in financial straits. She turned to Roman Catholic clergy for support and, in 1805, she formally became a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1806, she met Father Louis Dubourg, who wanted to start a congregation of women religious, patterned after the French Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. In 1809 Elizabeth took vows and became “Mother Seton” to a small community of seven women, know as the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph, dedicated to teaching. The sisters were given land in rural Maryland and, in 1810, they opened St. Joseph's Free School to educate needy girls. The Sisters intertwined social ministry, education, and religious formation in all their varied works. Seton dispatched sisters to operate orphanages in Philadelphia and New York City. Out of the pioneering work of Elizabeth Seton, five independent communities of the Sisters of Charity now exist, offering ministry and care for the most vulnerable.

Elizabeth Ann Seton remained the Mother of the Sisters of Charity until her death on January 4th, 1821

Let us pray: Give us grace, O God, to love you in all things and above all things, that following the example of your servant Elizabeth Ann Seton we might express our love for you

in the service of others. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**