

Christmas Day I, December 25, 2019

The Collect: Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born this day of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Isaiah 9:2-7 read from the Modern English Version Bible

2 The people who walked in darkness
 have seen a great light;
those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death,
 upon them the light has shined.

3 You have multiplied the nation
 and increased the joy;
they rejoice before You
 according to the joy of harvest
and as men rejoice
 when they divide the spoil.

4 For You have broken the yoke of his burden
 and the bar of his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor
 as in the day of Midian's defeat.

5 For all the sandals of the tramping warriors
 and all the garments rolled in blood
 shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

6 For unto us a child is born,
 unto us a son is given,
 and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

And his name shall be called
 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace
there shall be no end,
upon the throne of David
and over his kingdom,
to order it and to establish it
with justice and with righteousness,
from now until forever.

The zeal of the Lord of Hosts
will perform this.

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 96 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 Sing to the Lord a new song; *

sing to the Lord, all the whole earth.

2 Sing to the Lord and bless his Name; *

proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day.

3 Declare his glory among the nations *

and his wonders among all peoples.

4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; *

he is more to be feared than all gods.

5 As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; *

but it is the Lord who made the heavens.

6 Oh, the majesty and magnificence of his presence! *

Oh, the power and the splendor of his sanctuary!

7 Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples; *

ascribe to the Lord honor and power.

8 Ascribe to the Lord the honor due his Name; *

bring offerings and come into his courts.

9 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; *

let the whole earth tremble before him.

10 Tell it out among the nations: "The Lord is King! *
he has made the world so firm that it cannot be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity."

11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it; *
let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

12 Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy
before the Lord when he comes, *
when he comes to judge the earth.

13 He will judge the world with righteousness *
and the peoples with his truth.

Epistle: Titus 2:11-14 read from The New American Standard Bible

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: Luke 2:1-20 read from the New Century Version Bible

2 At that time, Augustus Caesar sent an order that all people in the countries under Roman rule must list their names in a register. 2 This was the first registration; it was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to their own towns to be registered.

4 So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee, and went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. 5 Joseph registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was now pregnant. 6 While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have the baby, 7 and she gave birth to her first son. Because there were no rooms left in the inn, she wrapped the

baby with pieces of cloth and laid him in a feeding trough.

8 That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and they became very frightened. 10 The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news that will be a great joy to all the people. 11 Today your Savior was born in the town of David. He is Christ, the Lord. 12 This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in pieces of cloth and lying in a feeding box.”

13 Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel, praising God and saying:

14 “Give glory to God in heaven,
and on earth let there be peace among the people who please God.”

15 When the angels left them and went back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem. Let’s see this thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about.”

16 So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in a feeding trough. 17 When they had seen him, they told what the angels had said about this child. 18 Everyone was amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured these things and continued to think about them. 20 Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything they had seen and heard. It had been just as the angel had told them.

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On December 29th we remember Thomas Becket, priest, read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

Thomas Becket was born in London in 1118, of a wealthy Norman family, and educated in England and in France. He then became an administrator for Theobald, Archbishop of

Canterbury. Later, he was sent to study law in Italy and France and, after being ordained deacon, he was appointed Archdeacon of Canterbury. His administrative skills eventually brought him to the notice of King Henry II, who, to Thomas's surprise, appointed him Chancellor of England. He and the King became intimate friends, and because of Becket's unquestioning loyalty and support of the King's interests in both Church and State, Henry secured Thomas's election as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162. Becket, foreseeing a break with his Royal Master, was reluctant to accept. As Archbishop he changed, as he tells us, "from a patron of play actors and a follower of hounds, to being a shepherd of souls." He also defended the interests of the Church against those of his former friend and patron, the King. The struggle between the two became so bitter that Thomas sought exile at an abbey in France.

When he returned to England six years later, the fragile reconciliation between Henry and the Archbishop broke down. In a fit of rage the King is alleged to have asked his courtiers, "Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?" Four barons, taking Henry's words as an order, made their way to Canterbury, and, upon finding the Archbishop in the cathedral on December 29, 1170, struck him down with their swords. Later, when the monks of Canterbury undressed Thomas's body to wash it and prepare it for burial, they discovered that under his episcopal robes their worldly and determined Archbishop was wearing a hair shirt. While such a garment hardly proves that a person is a saint, it clearly indicates that Thomas was motivated in the exercise of his office by far more than political considerations. His final words to the four barons before receiving the fatal blow were, "Willingly I die for the name of Jesus and in the defense of the Church."

Let us pray: O God, our strength and our salvation, you called your servant Thomas Becket to be a shepherd of your people and a defender of your Church: Keep your household from all evil and raise up among us faithful pastors and leaders who are wise in the ways of the gospel; through Jesus Christ, the shepherd of our souls, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**