

First Sunday after Christmas December 27, 2020

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 New Revised Standard Version Bible Anglicized

61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,

my whole being 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 with a garland,

and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots,

and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,

so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise

to spring up before all the nations.

62:1 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,

and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,

until her vindication shines out like the dawn,

and her salvation like a burning torch.

2 The nations shall see your vindication,

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.

Hear what the spirit is saying to God's people

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 World English Bible

23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, confined for the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 So that the law has become our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent out his Son, born to a woman, born under the law, 5 that he might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as children. 6 And because you are children, God sent out the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, "Abba,* Father!" 7 So you are no longer a bondservant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Hear what the spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: John 1:1-18 read from the Revised Standard Version Bible

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 anything 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 for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

9 The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. 11 He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power 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, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. 15 (John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.'") 16 And from his fulness have we 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 Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On December 29th we celebrate the life of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. 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.**