

First Sunday after the Epiphany, January 7

The Collect and Psalm will be read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer
The Old Testament, New Testament and Gospel will be read from the Easy to Read Version Bible

The Collect: Father in heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting.
Amen.

Old Testament: Genesis 1:1-5

1 God created the sky and the earth. At first, 2 the earth was completely empty. There was nothing on the earth. Darkness covered the ocean, and God's Spirit moved over the water.

3 Then God said, "Let there be light!" And light began to shine. 4 He saw the light, and he knew that it was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God named the light "day," and he named the darkness "night."

There was evening, and then there was morning. This was the first day.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's People

Psalm: Psalm 29

1 Ascribe to the Lord, you gods, *

ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his Name; *

worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;

the God of glory thunders; *

the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

4 The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice; *
the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendor.

5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; *
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, *
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

7 The voice of the Lord splits the flames of fire;
the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; *
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

8 The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe *
and strips the forests bare.

9 And in the temple of the Lord *
all are crying, "Glory!"

10 The Lord sits enthroned above the flood; *
the Lord sits enthroned as King for evermore.

11 The Lord shall give strength to his people; *
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

New Testament: Acts 19:1-7

19 While Apollos was in the city of Corinth, Paul was visiting some places on his way to Ephesus. In Ephesus he found some other followers of the Lord. 2 He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

These followers said to him, "We have never even heard of a Holy Spirit!"

3 Paul asked them, "So what kind of baptism did you have?"

They said, "It was the baptism that John taught."

4 Paul said, "John told people to be baptized to show they wanted to change their lives. He told people to believe in the one who would come after him, and that one is Jesus."

5 When these followers heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 Then Paul laid his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came on them. They began speaking different languages and prophesying. 7 There were about twelve men in this group.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: Mark 1:4-11

4 So John the Baptizer came and was baptizing people in the desert area. He told them to be baptized to show that they wanted to change their lives, and then their sins would be forgiven. 5 All the people from Judea, including everyone from Jerusalem, came out to John. They confessed the bad things they had done, and he baptized them in the Jordan River.

6 John wore clothes made from camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey.

7 This is what John told the people: "There is someone coming later who is able to do more than I can. I am not good enough to be the slave who stoops down to untie his sandals. 8 I baptize you with water, but the one who is coming will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

9 About that time Jesus came from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the place where John was. John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. 10 As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw the sky torn open. The Spirit came down on him like a dove. 11 A voice came from heaven and said, "You are my Son, the one I love. I am very pleased with you."

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On January 10 we celebrate the life of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

William Laud, born in 1573, became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, having been Charles I's principal ecclesiastical adviser for several years before. He was the most

prominent of a new generation of churchmen who disliked many of the ritual practices which had developed during the reign of Elizabeth I, and who were bitterly opposed by the Puritans.

Laud believed the Church of England to be in direct continuity with the medieval Church, and he stressed the unity of Church and State, exalting the role of the king as the supreme governor. He emphasized the priesthood and the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, and caused consternation by insisting on the reverencing of the altar, returning it to its pre-Reformation position against the east wall of the church, and hedging it about with rails.

As head of the courts of High Commission and Star Chamber, Laud was abhorred for the harsh sentencing of prominent Puritans. His identification with the unpopular policies of King Charles, his support of the war against Scotland in 1640, and his efforts to make the Church independent of Parliament, made him widely disliked. He was impeached for treason by the Long Parliament in 1640, and finally beheaded on January 10, 1645.

Laud's reputation has remained controversial to this day. Honored as a martyr and condemned as an intolerant bigot, he was compassionate in his defense of the rights of the common people against the landowners. He was honest, devout, loyal to the king and to the rights and privileges of the Church of England. He tried to reform and protect the Church in accordance with his sincere convictions. But in many ways he was out of step with the views of the majority of his countrymen, especially about the "Divine Right of Kings."

He made a noble end, praying on the scaffold: "The Lord receive my soul, and have mercy upon me, and bless this kingdom with peace and charity, that there may not be this effusion of Christian blood amongst them."

Let us pray: Keep us, O Lord, constant in faith and zealous in witness, that, like your servant William Laud, we may live in your fear, die in your favor, and rest in your peace; for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**