

Sunday 19th January 2020

Epiphany 3

White



Collect

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Isaiah 9:1-4 English Standard Version (ESV)

For to Us a Child Is Born

9¹ ^[a] But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. ^[b] ² ^[c] The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. ³ You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. ⁴ For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

Footnotes: a. Ch 8:23 in Hebrew. b. or *of the Gentiles*. c. Ch 9:1 in Hebrew.

COMMENT: This hopeful oracle has many historical references to the Assyrian invasion of the Northern Kingdom in 733-32 BC. During that invasion, the Assyrians subjugated the territories of two of Israel's tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali, and threatened rest of the tribal territories of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. In later Old Testament times, this was simply known as Galilee. The gospel authors referred to it by that name, although by the 1st century AD it was part of the Roman tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea ruled by Herod Antipas. Those in the captured territories as well as in the remaining kingdoms of Israel and Judah lived constant fear of further Assyrian invasion. In this passage from Isaiah, the most serious burden they had to bear was the idolatry adopted by Ahaz, king of Judah. His apostasy was part of his appeal for help from Tiglath-Pileser, the Assyrian overlord, for protection from surrounding enemies (2 Kings 16). The prophet Isaiah, however, a member of a reform movement during the reign of Ahaz, saw the situation as an occasion for great hope. The light that shone in the darkness (verse 2) was apparently the birth of a new prince, heir to the Judean throne of David (verse 6). This is may have

been Hezekiah, son of Ahaz (715-687 BC) whom Jewish tradition has always linked with this passage. 2 Chronicles 28-31 gives some highly idealised details of a religious reformation during Hezekiah's reign. Then as now, a scorched earth policy was an important military strategy to prevent local populations from aiding their defenders. Isaiah hoped that a decisive victory would be won over the oppressors like that of Gideon, a celebrated hero of an earlier, pre-monarchic saga, over marauding Midianites, a semi-nomadic tribe who may have lived east of the Jordan. (See Judges 6-8). The passage crafted for its time, became prophetic for a time yet to be fulfilled by Jesus, Israel's true Messiah.

Matthew 4:12-23 English Standard Version (ESV)

Jesus Begins His Ministry

⁴¹² Now when he heard that John had been arrested, Jesus withdrew into Galilee. ¹³ And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵ “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.” ¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”^[a] ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Ministers to Great Crowds

²³ And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Footnotes: a. The Greek word *anthropoi* refers here to both men and women.

COMMENT: When John had been put into prison, spelling the end of his active ministry, Jesus begins his public Ministry with the calling of the first of his disciples, four ordinary fishermen of Galilee, was the beginning of the creation of a community of those who would believe in and follow him. His healing ministry was also a sign that the reign of God had already begun.

℟ It is your face, O Lord, that I seek.

¹ The Lord is my light and my help;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
before whom shall I shrink? ℟

² When evil-doers draw near
to devour my flesh,
it is they, my enemies and foes,
who stumble and fall. ℟

³ Though an army encamp against me
my heart would not fear.
Though war break out against me
even then would I trust. ℟

⁴ There is one thing I ask of the Lord,
for this I long,
to live in the house of the Lord,
all the days of my life,
to savor the sweetness of the Lord,
to behold his temple. ℟

⁵ For there he keeps me safe in his tent
in the day of evil.
He hides me in the shelter of his tent,
on a rock he sets me safe. ℟

⁶ And now my head shall be raised
above my foes who surround me
and I shall offer within his tent
a sacrifice of joy.
I will sing and make music for the Lord. ℟

⁷ O Lord, hear my voice when I call;
have mercy and answer.

⁸ Of you my heart has spoken:
“Seek his face.” ℟

It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;

⁹ hide not your face.
Dismiss not your servant in anger;
you have been my help. ℟

Do not abandon or forsake me,
O God my help!

¹⁰ Though father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will receive me.

✠ It is your face, O Lord, that I seek.

¹¹ Instruct me, Lord, in your way;
on an even path lead me.

¹² When they lie in ambush protect me
from my enemy's greed.
False witnesses rise against me,
breathing out fury. **✠**

¹³ I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living.

¹⁴ Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.
Hope in the Lord! **✠**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: This very personal prayer expresses trust in God in the face of hostile opponents. The psalmist seeks access to the temple where he may meet God as if face to face.

Short Preface

And now we give you thanks because, in the incarnation of the Word, a new light has dawned upon the world, that all the nations may be brought out of darkness to see the radiance of your glory.

Post Communion

Almighty Father, whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world: may your people, illumined by your word and sacraments, shine with the radiance of his glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

Blessing

Christ the Son of God perfect in you the image of his glory and gladden your hearts with the good news of his kingdom; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**