

Sunday & Monday
24th & 25th December 2017

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day

Gold or ~~White~~



Collect (Christmas Night)

Eternal God, who made this most holy night to shine with the brightness of your one true light: bring us, who have known the revelation of that light on earth, to see the radiance of your heavenly glory; 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**

Collect (Christmas Day)

Almighty God, you have given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him and as at this time to be born 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 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 52:7-10 English Standard Version (ESV)

52 ⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” ⁸ The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. ⁹ Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰ The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

COMMENT: Isaiah of the exile exults over the prospect of a messenger running from Babylon to Jerusalem with the message that God reigns! Three synonyms are worth noting in verse 7: peace (shalom), good news, and salvation (or victory). The prophet describes the sentinels on the city walls catching sight

of this running messenger in verse 8. They are eye witnesses to The LORD's return. The word "comfort" in verse 9 connotes much more than sympathy; it also includes acts of deliverance (cf. 40:1; 49:13; 51:3). The LORD has redeemed Jerusalem. In the Old Testament, "redeem" means fulfilling the obligations of a family relationship. Hence The LORD has been the best mother and father Israel has ever known. In baring his arm, verse 10, The LORD is playing the role of the divine warrior who wins deliverance and victory for his people. The Hebrew word for victory is translated in Bibles as 'salvation'. At Christmas we believe that God's rule is affirmed and confirmed in the birth of Jesus. We should cultivate among ourselves the excitement and anticipation of the ancient prophet and the heralds on Jerusalem's walls. The inclusion of Gentiles is clearly signalled in verse 10: All the ends of the earth will see the victory of our God! We also might picture ourselves as the messenger, sharing with others the news of God's reign.

John 1:1-14 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Word Became Flesh

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 any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life,^[a] 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 as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own,^[b] and his own people^[c] did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right 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, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Footnotes: a. Or *was not any thing made. That which has been made was life in him.* b. Greek *to his own things*; that is, to his own domain, or to his own people. c. *People* is implied in Greek

COMMENT: This passage takes a different look at the Nativity. John's "Christmas" would be difficult to do in a children's play. There is no baby lying

in a manger. There are no parents travelling to Bethlehem. There are no angels or shepherds. There is no star or magi. John doesn't give us much of a historical account of Christmas, instead he gives us a confession of faith about the incarnation of God. John isn't so concerned about exactly what happened in Bethlehem during the reign of Caesar Augustus (or King Herod). He is much more concerned about belief in Jesus, and the incarnation. The Christmas confession of John's community (note the "us" and "we" in verse 14) extends beyond a baby being born and wrapped in cloths and laid in a manger. It is the belief that he existed before creation and he comes and lives among us now. For those who might point out there is no mention of the virgin birth, this is implied and understood by the text. Verses 12-13 reveals how the believers become "Children of God" - by adoption - and yet spiritually born; "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." This leads on to verse 14, of which the Word is described as "The only Son from the father". This makes a clear distinction. He is the *only son from the Father*. A few verses on this is further strengthened; "*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*"

Psalm 98 *Cantate Domino* Grail Psalter

℟ **All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.**

¹ *A Psalm.*

Sing a new song to the Lord
for he has worked wonders.
His right hand and his holy arm
have brought salvation. **℟**

² The Lord has made known his salvation;
has shown his justice to the nations.

³ He has remembered his truth and love
for the house of Israel. **℟**

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.

⁴ Shout to the Lord, all the earth,
ring out your joy. **℟**

⁵ Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp
with the sound of music.

⁶ With trumpets and the sound of the horn
acclaim the King, the Lord. **℟**

⁷ Let the sea and all within it, thunder;
the world, and all its peoples.

⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands
and the hills ring out their joy **℟**

⁹ at the presence of the Lord: for he comes,
he comes to rule the earth.
He will rule the world with justice
and the peoples with fairness.

✠ All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

**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 triumphant hymn may well have been used in the temple ritual for the Jewish New Year when Israel celebrated the enthronement of God as sovereign of the world. Not only God's special people, Israel, but the whole earth and all of nature are summoned to join in the praise.

Short Preface

And now we give you thanks because, by the power of the Holy Spirit, he took our nature upon him and was born of the Virgin Mary his mother, that being himself without sin, he might make us clean from all sin.

Post Communion (Christmas Night)

God our Father, in this night you have made known to us again the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: confirm our faith and fix our eyes on him until the day dawns and Christ the Morning Star rises in our hearts. To him be glory both now and for ever. **Amen**

Post Communion (Christmas Day)

God our Father, whose Word has come among us in the Holy Child of Bethlehem: may the light of faith illumine our hearts and shine in our words and deeds; through him who is Christ the Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with peace and goodwill and make you partakers of the divine nature; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**