

FIRST READING

Isaiah 63:7–9

A reading from Isaiah.

I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD,
the praiseworthy acts of the LORD,
because of all that the LORD has done for us,
and the great favor to the house of Israel
that he has shown them according to his mercy,
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

⁸For he said, "Surely they are my people,
children who will not deal falsely";
and he became their savior

⁹in all their distress.

It was no messenger or angel
but his presence that saved them;
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The psalm will be read responsively by whole verse. The assembly will read the verses in bold print.

- ¹Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise God in the heights.
- ²**Praise the LORD, all you angels;
sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.**
- ³Praise the LORD, sun and moon;
sing praise, all you shining stars.
- ⁴**Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens,
and you waters above the heavens.**
- ⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD,
who commanded, and they were created,
- ⁶**who made them stand fast forever and ever,
giving them a law that shall not pass away.**
- ⁷Praise the LORD from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps;
- ⁸**fire and hail, snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, doing God's will;**
- ⁹mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars;
- ¹⁰**wild beasts and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds;**
- ¹¹sovereigns of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the world;
- ¹²**young men and maidens,
old and young together.**
- ¹³Let them praise the name of the LORD,
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and
heaven.
- ¹⁴**The LORD has raised up strength for the people and praise for all
faithful servants,
the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD.
Hallelujah!**

A reading from Hebrews.

- ¹⁰It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹²saying,
"I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you." >>>>>

¹³And again,
"I will put my trust in him."

And again,

"Here am I and the children whom God has given me."

¹⁴Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. ¹⁶For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The assembly will please stand to welcome the gospel.

GOSPEL CAROL

"Go Tell It on the Mountain"

Refrain

**Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born!**

**Down in a lonely manger
the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain***

GOSPEL

Matthew 2:13–23

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the second chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹³Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

¹⁶When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

>>>>>

¹⁸"A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."

¹⁹When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ²⁰Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead. ²¹Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. ²³There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: 

These readings are related to the Lectionary readings for this Sunday. We invite you to take time each day to read the assigned Bible passage.

Sunday	Matthew 2:13-23	The escape to Egypt
Monday	Jeremiah 31:15-20	Hope for the future
Tuesday	Ecclesiastes 3:1-13	For everything a season
Wednesday	Hosea 11:1-11	Out of Egypt I called my son
Thursday	Galatians 3:26 - 4:7	No longer slaves
Friday	Isaiah 43:16-21	Do not dwell on the past
Saturday	Revelation 21:1-6	God will make everything new
Sunday	John 1:10-18	God with us

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK:

People of Israel, you are my own dear children. Don't I love you best of all? Though I often make threats, I want you to be near me, so I will have mercy on you. I, the LORD, have spoken. *Jeremiah 31:20* (CEV)

SAY, PRAY AND BLESS:

A Prayer for the Week:

Lord Jesus, thank you for becoming human to save us. Help us to live for you. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

God, we thank you for this time to share a meal with the people we love. Bless this food so that it gives us strength to serve you. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May God be loving and kind to you. May God lift you up and carry you all your life. Amen.

CARING CONVERSATION:

Discuss in your household or small group:

- What makes you happy? What makes you sad?
- A time of great sadness came to the town of Bethlehem soon after the visit of the Wise Men (Matthew 2:16-18). What do you do when you feel sad?
- How does faith in God help us when we are sad?

DEVOTIONS:

While Jesus was still very young, his family fled to Egypt to escape from King Herod. There are many people in our world today who are forced to flee their homes because their countries have become unsafe for them – we call them refugees. Find out more about refugees in our world today (e.g. visit www.refugeesinternational.org). Talk together about what it would be like to be a refugee and pray for those in such situations.

SERVICE:

December 26 is called “Boxing Day” in various parts of the world (e.g. Britain, Canada, Australia). In the Middle Ages, it was the day on which wealthy landowners gave gifts to their servants and other workers. It was also the day churches distributed the contents of their alms boxes to the poor. Use this day to prepare gifts for people in your community who serve you through their work (e.g. police officers, fire fighters, postal workers). Have fun delivering your gifts over the next week!

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS:

When Jesus was born, God created a new household. Use the remaining eleven days of Christmas (December 26 – January 5) to celebrate the gift of people God has gathered into your household or family circle. Brainstorm activities you can do together over these days (e.g. go for a walk, play a board game, visit friends, dine out, play a sport).