

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
CHRISTMAS DAY AND SUNDAY 26 DECEMBER 2021 – 1st OF CHRISTMAS

COLLECT FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

Lord Jesus Christ, your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth:
accept our heartfelt praise as we worship you,
our Saviour and our eternal God. Amen.

Psalm 98

- 1 Sing to the Lord a new song, ♦
for he has done marvellous things.
- 2 His own right hand and his holy arm ♦
have won for him the victory.
- 3 The Lord has made known his salvation; ♦
his deliverance has he openly shown in the sight of the nations.
- 4 He has remembered his mercy and faithfulness
towards the house of Israel, ♦
and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
- 5 Sound praises to the Lord, all the earth; ♦
break into singing and make music.
- 6 Make music to the Lord with the lyre, ♦
with the lyre and the voice of melody.
- 7 With trumpets and the sound of the horn ♦
sound praises before the Lord, the King.
- 8 Let the sea thunder and all that fills it, ♦
the world and all that dwell upon it.
- 9 Let the rivers clap their hands ♦
and let the hills ring out together before the Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.
- 10 In righteousness shall he judge the world ♦
and the peoples with equity.

Hebrews 1: 1-4

God Has Spoken by His Son

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son,^[a] whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³ He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains^[b] all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins,

he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

John 1: 1-14

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 came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life,^[a] and the life was the light of all people. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. **8** He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. **9** The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.^[b]

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. **11** He came to what was his own,^[c] and his own people did not accept him. **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 or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son,^[d] full of grace and truth.

1ST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

COLLECT

God in Trinity, eternal unity of perfect love:
gather the nations to be one family,
and draw us into your holy life
through the birth of Emmanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Psalm 148

- 1 Alleluia.
Praise the Lord from the heavens; ◆
praise him in the heights.
- 2 Praise him, all you his angels; ◆
praise him, all his host.
- 3 Praise him, sun and moon; ◆
praise him, all you stars of light.
- 4 Praise him, heaven of heavens, ◆
and you waters above the heavens.

- 5 Let them praise the name of the Lord, ♦
for he commanded and they were created.
- 6 He made them fast for ever and ever; ♦
he gave them a law which shall not pass away.
- 7 Praise the Lord from the earth, ♦
you sea monsters and all deeps;
- 8 Fire and hail, snow and mist, ♦
tempestuous wind, fulfilling his word;
- 9 Mountains and all hills, ♦
fruit trees and all cedars;
- 10 Wild beasts and all cattle, ♦
creeping things and birds on the wing;
- 11 Kings of the earth and all peoples, ♦
princes and all rulers of the world;
- 12 Young men and women,
old and young together; ♦
let them praise the name of the Lord.
- 13 For his name only is exalted, ♦
his splendour above earth and heaven.
- 14 He has raised up the horn of his people
and praise for all his faithful servants, ♦
the children of Israel, a people who are near him.
Alleluia.

Colossians 3: 12-17

¹² As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord^[a] has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ^[b] dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.^[c] ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Luke 2: 41-52

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the

teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents^[a] saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' ⁴⁹ He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'^[b] ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years,^[c] and in divine and human favour.

A Christmas Reflection from Hannah....

It's been a real joy to sing loudly (though masked) at Carol Services around Severn Loop this year. Even the most reticent carol-singer has reported an augmented sense of delight at singing out our story and inhabiting those familiar tunes. It's also been so special to be back in our two schools and Isle Court Nursing Home to mark the season. Having been stood down last year, throughout December an old doll wrapped in a blanket accompanies me in the car wherever I go, just in case someone is needed to play the role of Baby Jesus! It's brought a smile to my face to get into the car and notice it slumped in the passenger seat. Things feel... or perhaps felt... rather closer to 'normal'.

So though this Christmas has (once again) brought challenges, there have also been blessings afresh- things that were denied us last time round, and which we appreciate all the more today. Immanuel- God with us- is of course always with us, last year and this year, at all times, in all places, no matter what. Jesus is with us in the world we greet today, with it its own particular gifts and losses. Jesus is with us in our homes, in our struggles, in our trauma and confusion as we try and work out how to thrive in such unforeseen fragility. He is faithful, he will not break company. He is real- we encounter him in each other, in our worship, in our prayers, in nature, in our hopes. Whether we are able to go to church this Christmas time, or whether we are at home, staying with relatives or even in hospital- may we know that all ground is holy, and there is no place that Immanuel, God with us, will not go.

So be nourished and encouraged by God who in Christ knows the full breadth of human experience. Who knows what it is to have a plan scuppered, to have the odds stacked against a situation, to be brought low and to live with longing- but who can transform our hearts from hardness to openness, from sorrow to joy, from despair to hope. Immanuel, the eternal word, is at work. And it is full of grace and truth. Amen.