



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2024 - 2nd SUNDAY before LENT

COLLECT

Almighty God,
you have created the heavens and the earth
and made us in your own image:
teach us to discern your hand in all your works
and your likeness in all your children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things,
now and for ever.

Psalm 104.26-37

- 26 O Lord, how manifold are your works! ♦
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
- 27 There is the sea, spread far and wide, ♦
and there move creatures beyond number, both small and great.
- 28 There go the ships, and there is that Leviathan ♦
which you have made to play in the deep.
- 29 All of these look to you ♦
to give them their food in due season.
- 30 When you give it them, they gather it; ♦
you open your hand and they are filled with good.
- 31 When you hide your face they are troubled; ♦
when you take away their breath,
they die and return again to the dust.
- 32 When you send forth your spirit, they are created, ♦
and you renew the face of the earth.
- 33 May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; ♦
may the Lord rejoice in his works;
- 34 He looks on the earth and it trembles; ♦
he touches the mountains and they smoke.
- 35 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; ♦
I will make music to my God while I have my being.
- 36 So shall my song please him ♦
while I rejoice in the Lord.
- 37 Let sinners be consumed out of the earth
and the wicked be no more. ♦
Bless the Lord, O my soul. Alleluia.

A Reading from the book of Proverbs Chapter 8, verses 1 & 22-31

Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her voice?
The LORD created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.
Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth—
when he had not yet made earth and fields,
or the world's first bits of soil.
When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and it is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from John, chapter 1, verses 1-14.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists / Communion around the Severn Loop, people stand to hear the Gospel and it is introduced with an Acclamation, as below:

Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

Christ was revealed in flesh, proclaimed among the nations and believed in throughout the world.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 1 verses 1-14.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

John 1.1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

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

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

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

A Reflection from Peter

As we hear those familiar words from John's Gospel we could be forgiven for wondering whether we've been taken for a ride in a time machine! Isn't that the Gospel for Christmas Day? Of course it is; and when we hear it then we are thinking of the beginning of God's intimate journey with us, sharing the life of this world. Emmanuel – God with us – that is the focus. But today, little more than a month later, we have started thinking: what does this all mean? Today's celebration of the liturgy takes us back to the very beginning – not just the beginning of God's journey in history as the baby in a manger, as the child asking questions in the temple, as the man who teaches and heals, as the Saviour unjustly tortured and crucified, as the Lord in glory, raised from the dead – but back to the beginning of time itself, back to the beginning of creation.

Today we have to get our heads around the truth that Jesus, the child born in Bethlehem, the man crucified in Jerusalem, this same Jesus is God. God - Father, Son and Spirit – is full of grace and truth from the beginning. Wisdom too is there with God – the wisdom the book of Proverbs speaks of as 'rejoicing before God always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.' God's coming amongst us in Jesus was not a sort of emergency mission to sort things out, but part of God's unfolding plan. It is God's nature to share the life of God in creation and re-creation – until the end when 'God will be all in all.' As the affairs of the world continue to disturb and trouble us it is a huge encouragement to be able to relax knowing that this is but a tiny speck of a moment in the story of God – and that story of God has a good beginning and a good ending, to which we and all creation are called. We just need a sense of proportion for now!