



John came to
testify to the light

JOHN 1:8

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

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WELCOME Thank you for being with us.

We are a Christian church within the Lutheran tradition (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) and we welcome people of all Christian traditions as well as people of other faiths and people of little or no faith. Christian worship has been offered to God in this congregation for 184 years. By worshipping with us today, you become part of that living tradition.

Restrooms are available in the Good Shepherd Room (Springettsbury lobby) and the narthex. Baby changing stations are provided in these restrooms.

Thank you for your faithfulness in sending your offering through the mail, by using online options from your financial institution, or through the “Donate” now from the church website **stpaulsyork.org**. Your gifts are keeping us current with the commitments associated with St. Paul’s and our ministry partners.

Guidelines for Worship during the time of COVID-19

Entering and Leaving the Church:

Face masks are required inside,

Kindly sign in at the door through which you entered. This will help if we need to be in contact.

Please take your service bulletin with you and dispose of it properly.

Offerings:

Monetary offerings may be placed in the basins provided at the entrances to the nave prior to the service or immediately following the service. You may also donate via our website at

www.stpaulsyork.org

While in the Nave:

Please wear your mask. Please sit in designated pews only. You may sit together as a family. We ask that you practice social distancing from one family to the next within the pew.

Communion Procedure:

- *Ushers will direct you. The pulpit side (left) of the nave communes first followed by the font side (right).*
- *Wearing your face mask, come to the chancel step taking your place at one of the five positions marked on the chancel floor with a green cross.*
- *Your entire household may gather at a position marked by the green cross.*
- *Extend your arms and cup your hands together to receive the host.*
- *Please do not reach out to take the Host from the minister.*
- *Once the minister has moved to the next group, then remove your mask, receive the host, replace your mask and return to your pew by the closest side aisle. There is no need to hurry.*
- *We are receiving communion in one kind only (bread/host).*

Our COVID-19 task force is assisting us as we remain open at St. Paul’s. Please thank Deacon Ellen Doughty, Dr. Jessica Ericson, Sheridan Palmer, Deacon Harold Sargeant, and Tim Yakim for their dedication and service.

Third Sunday of Advent

December 13, 2020

8:00 & 10:30 AM

Holy Communion Setting 9 ELW

PRELUDE

Comfort, Comfort Now My People

Gerald Near

Stand

BRIEF ORDER FOR CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

INTROIT

The refrain is sung by all. The stanza is sung by the cantor.

The concluding refrain is sung by all.

The King of glo - ry comes, the na - tion re - joic - es.

O - pen the gates be - fore him, lift up your voic - es.

Stanza 3 Sing then of David's son, our Savior and brother;

In all of Galilee was never another.

REFRAIN

APOSTOLIC GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. . . Almighty God, you once called John the Baptist to give witness to the coming of your Son and to prepare his way. Grant us, your people, the wisdom to see your purpose today and the openness to hear your will, that we may witness to Christ's coming and so prepare his way; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Sit

READING **Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11**

back page

At the conclusion of the reading The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

PSALM **Psalm 126** *spoken responsively half-verse*

- ¹ When the LORD restored the for- | tunes of Zion,*
then were we like | those who dream.
- ² Then was our mouth | filled with laughter,*
and our tongue with | shouts of joy.
- ³ Then they said a- | mong the nations,*
"The LORD has done great | things for them."
- ⁴ The LORD has done great | things for us,*
and we are | glad indeed.
- ⁵ Restore our for- | tunes, O LORD,*
like the watercourses | of the Negev.
- ⁶ Those who | sowed with tears*
will reap with | songs of joy.
- ⁷ Those who go out weeping, carry- | ing the seed,*
will come again with joy, shoulder- | ing their sheaves.

Stand

VERSE

Alleluia. **Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight his paths, all nations shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia.**

HOLY GOSPEL

John 1:6-8, 19-28

(back cover)

The Holy Gospel according to **St. John. Glory to you, O Lord.**

At the conclusion of the Gospel.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

SERMON

Pastor Reep

Stand

APOSTLE'S CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.* On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of power and might, shine your radiance and come quickly to this weary world.

Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

Lord, you have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming the good news.

Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people who contribute their prayers and talents to public worship. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Be present with the leaders of every nation as they govern. Give them a spirit of righteousness, that your goodness and mercy is revealed through their actions. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm. Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. Make your church a place of refuge and healing. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We are grateful for the beloved, imperfect people whose lives testified to your radiant love. Anoint all who mourn with the oil of gladness. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

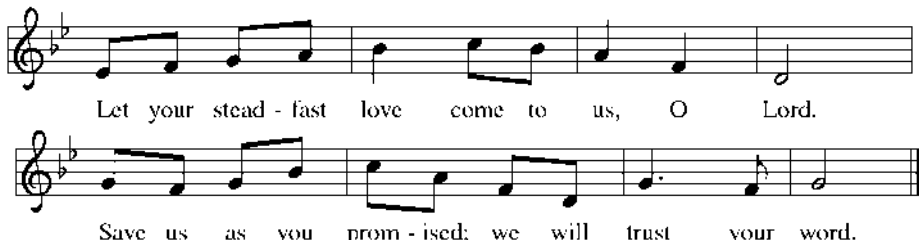
Amen.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERTORY



Let your steady love come to us, O Lord.
Save us as you promised: we will trust your word.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Blessed are you,

O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you have made, for the sake of him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

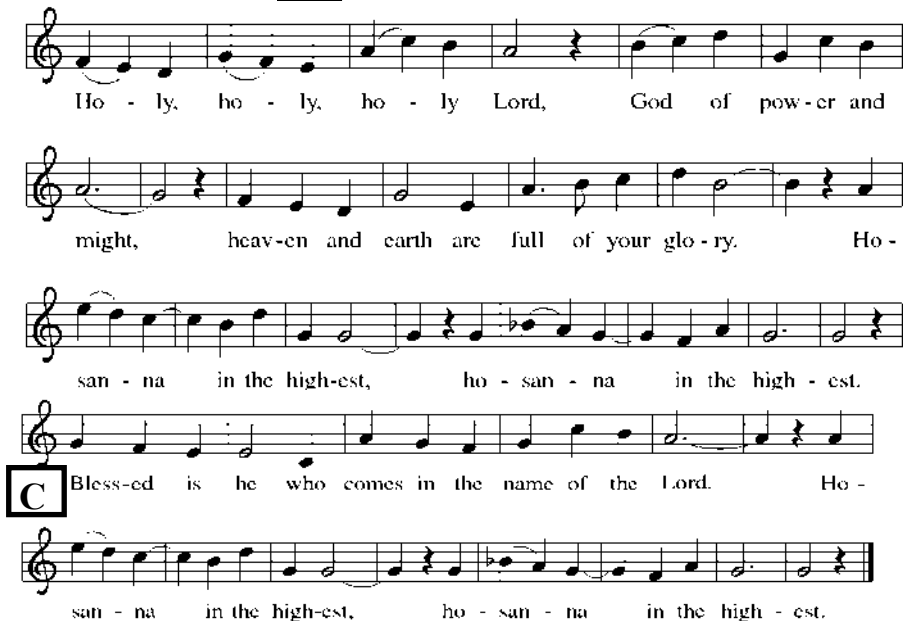
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE *The preface appropriate to the day is said.*

SANCTUS *Sung by cantor.* **C** *Congregation joins at the "Blessed is he..."*



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and
might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho -
san - na in the high-est, ho - san - na in the high - est.
C Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -
san - na in the high-est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING

Holy God, the Beginning and the End, our Salvation and our Hope, We praise you for creating a world of order and beauty When we brought on chaos, cruelty and despair, you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy.

At this end of the ages your Son Jesus came to bring us your love and to heal all the suffering world.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his life, death, and resurrection, we await his coming again. Send your Spirit on us and on this bread and wine: strengthen our faith, increase our hope, and bring to birth the justice and joy of your Son.

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever.

Amen

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

FRACTION *a brief silence is kept*

AGNUS DEI *sung by the Cantor*

Sit The pastor cleanses hands and prepares for the distribution of Holy Communion.

COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL

Instructions for receiving the sacrament are on the inside front cover of the bulletin.

Communion Hymn *Comfort, Comfort Now My People (LBW 29)*
Stanza 1 All Stanza 2 Cantor Stanza 3 All



1 "Com - fort, com - fort now my peo - ple; tell of peace!" So says our God.
2 For the her - ald's voice is cry - ing in the des - ert far and near,
3 Straight shall be what long was crook - ed, and the rough - er plac - es plain!



Com - fort those who sit in dark - ness mourn - ing un - der sor - row's load.
call - ing us to true re - pen - tance, since the king - dom now is here.
Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, as be - fits his ho - ly reign!



To God's peo - ple now pro - claim that God's par - don waits for them!
Oh, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way!
For the glo - ry of the Lord now on earth is shed a - broad,



Tell them that their war is o - ver; God will reign in peace for - ev - er.
Let the val - leys rise to meet him, and the hills bow down to greet him!
and all flesh shall see the to - ken that God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

Stand

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen**

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. Almighty God, in the Eucharist you cleanse us from our sins and prepare us for the coming of your Son. Make us ready always to welcome Him into our hearts as we receive your Holy Sacrament; though Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, **+**Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord **Thanks be to God.**

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*Please be respectful of distancing and personal space as you leave.
Feel free to gather outside for conversation.
Please take your service bulletin with you and dispose of it properly.*



Flowers This Week

*This week's flowers are given to the Glory of God
and in honor of my daughter Jaclyn's 13th birthday
December 14th by Joe Kinkella.*

In our prayers we remember...

*Deborah Fulton, Reid Weinbrom, Darrell Kopp, Becky Diggs, Bill Troutman,
Shawn Sunday, Mike Johnston, Betty Mehring, Drew Herdson, David List, Jessica
Ericson, Kristine Gross, Porter Stacey,.*



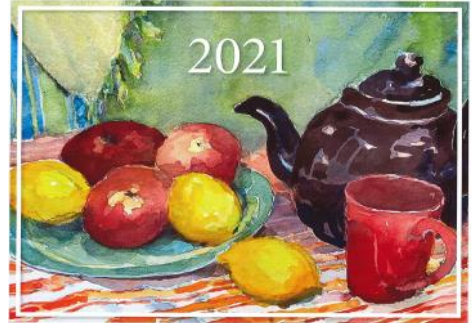
*Preparing for the
Christmas Season*

Advent and Christmas Devotional ideas, activities and resources for all ages can be found on the church website. Look on the front page or under the tab LEARN. stpaulsyork.org

Advent Zoom Bible Study: The women in Jesus lineage according to the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 1. Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm. December 16. Pastor Reep spoke in his sermon on October 11th, about the book of Matthew beginning with the long list of names that starts with Abraham and ends with Jesus. In that list there are five women named. Join us as we learn about these women and what their lives could mean for us today. To register and receive Zoom information, call the church office, 717 or Patty Snyder 717-578-2253.

2021 Calendar Sale

Make sure you get your copies of the 2021 calendar! They feature the watercolor paintings of Pastor Reep. The images highlight the beautiful cottages from the grounds of the Chautauqua Institute, Chautauqua NY (painted during summer 2019) and fruits and flowers still life arrangements (painted during 2020). We ask for a minimum donation of \$20. All proceeds go to the Capital Campaign. The original paintings will be auctioned at our October 16th 2021 event. Thank you for supporting this fundraising effort.



Food Pantry—December

Items needed: Stuffing, Canned beans, cranberry sauce, canned pumpkin, canned beans, canned vegetables, canned meats, apple sauce, mashed potato mix, rice, pasta side dishes and peanut butter & jelly. Anyone able to help can contact Teresa Rohrbaugh or Janet and Larry Moore. Plastic Bags are always needed. Money donations are gratefully accepted. Please place cash or check in a “special” envelope marked “Pantry”.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed	Thursday	Fri	Sat
13 Advent 3 8:00 AM Holy Eucharist 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist 5:00 PM Evening Service	14 9:00 - 11:30 AM Preschool 7:00 PM Council Meeting	15 Newsletter Deadline 9:00 - 11:30 AM Preschool 9:30 AM Pantry Volunteers 6:00 PM Christmas Rehearsal	16 6:00 PM Church Decorating 9:00 - 11:30 AM Preschool	17 9:00 - 11:30 AM Preschool 6:30 PM Music Ensembles	18	19
20 Advent 4 - 8:00 AM Holy Eucharist - Blessing of Creche 9:15 AM Christmas Rehearsal 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist - Ringing in of Christmas 5:00 PM Evening Service -	21 First Day of Winter 9:00 - 11:30 AM NO Preschool 7:00 PM Finance Committee	22 9:00 - 11:30 AM NO Preschool 9:30 AM Pantry Volunteers 12:30 PM Christian Ed Meeting	23 9:00 - 11:30 AM NO Preschool	24 CHRISTMAS EVE - reservations needed 4:00 PM Christmas Eve Carol Sing George Street Porch 7:00 PM Vespers - Church Nave 11:00 PM Christmas Prayers - Compline	25 Christmas Day Service 10:30 AM by reservation only - with Communion	26

STAFF

Pastor
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 Organist, Choir Director
 Bookkeeper
 Secretary
 Sexton
 Preschool Director

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Christmas Worship Schedule at St. Paul's



Please note the adjusted schedule for the entire Christmas season

Sunday, December 20, 2020 **The Fourth Sunday of Advent**

8:00 AM Holy Communion with Blessing of the Creche
10:30 AM Holy Communion with The Ringing in of Christmas
5:00 PM Vespers with Sacrament of Holy Baptism

Thursday, December 24, 2020 **Christmas Eve**

4:00 PM Outside Christmas Carol Service with Brass Ensemble
7:00 PM Christmas Eve Vespers
11:00 PM Christmas Eve Compline

Friday, December 25, 2020 **Christmas Day**

10:30 AM Holy Communion

Sunday, December 27, 2020 **The First Sunday of Christmas**

8:00 AM Holy Communion, spoken
10:30 AM Lessons and Carols
5:00 PM Lessons and Carols

Sunday, January 3, 2021 **Epiphany**

8:00 AM Holy Communion
10:30 AM Holy Communion
5:00 PM Holy Communion

Christmas Service Reservation Sign-up—We are utilizing a sign up for our Christmas services to help us monitor in person attendance for for our liturgies. With the guidance of CDC and our own St. Paul's COVID-19 task force we want to maintain the 20% for worshipers gathering in doors. Through an advance sign-up we can plan accordingly. **At the time of this printing there remain: 41 seats at 11PM, 49 seats at 10:30AM Christmas Day. The 7PM service is full.**

The 4:00 PM outside Christmas Eve Service does not require a reservation. Please note that you will need to bring a lawn chair (if desired). **A face mask is required.**

Mary Barry, previous cohost of the Great British Baking Show, has her own special series where she travels to great English country houses, visits with the families, enjoys some renowned delicacies, and whips up a few of her own in elaborate kitchens often from days of yore. She shares an interest in kitchen gardens and wild game taken from the estate's vast land holding.

In one episode she visits with a Duchess, an American woman who married into a title, who upon opening a dresser drawer reveals stacks upon stacks of letters tied up with ribbon. These were love letters sent between her husband's great grandparents. The love letters awaken something of life in another setting, and the interests and affection that united her husband's great grandparents for a lifetime.

Love letters like those, may be a thing of the past. Thinking of emails, snap chats, and texts fancied up with emoji, I don't think they are in the same league as those love letters pictured in the dresser drawer of that 13th century country house. But love letters have historically awakened something within the recipient.

The prophet Isaiah is trying to awaken something in the people he is called to serve. I think of this Old Testament reading as a kind of love letter. Love letters are wonderful to receive. They have a way of making the common, ordinary things, extraordinary. They awaken in you something you may not have known about yourself. They open up the future, making the most difficult of times, seem possible. Not only do they bring joy but they create hope.

That is the situation in the Old Testament reading this morning. It is as though the prophet Isaiah is sending a love letter to God's people. He is not condemning them for their past unfaithfulness, nor reminding them of their short comings. Isaiah is bringing good news and comfort to God's people who truly need to hear it. These are words shared with a people who are disheartened. They have returned from exile in Babylon. They have returned to their homes, to their country, to a way of life that by every indication should have been normal and comfortable. And yet that is not what they find.

They return home to find others tending their flocks and fields, someone else residing in their home, or their homes destroyed and the land repurposed. Still others found new people working jobs that once had belonged to them. Community leaders were different. Even the religious community had changed.

They are a discouraged lot. It seems to them that there really isn't any good news. They are a people who by every indication remain oppressed, remain brokenhearted, and remain captive to foreign rule and captive to a different way of life. There doesn't seem to be any physical release, any actual favor or any measurable comfort. And yet God promises that God is doing a new thing. God will provide, God will give, God will gladden, God will praise, God will plant and they shall build, and raise up, and repair.

And so the joy, rejoicing, and love, seems to be made known, experienced, realized, in the **building**, in the **raising up** and in the **repairing** of all that is shattered. It seems that in the **doing** of life, the salvation, the righteousness promised, gets made known. And God is present while it is taking place. In poetic lover letter fashion, the prophet proclaims “As the earth brings forth shoots, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.”

I have a friend who in late November or early December gifts me with Paper White bulbs to plant in doors, to provide color and fragrance to our holiday decorating. I like to plant them in a clear glass container so that I can observe the often unseen growth of bulbs I plant out of doors in the flower beds. Each morning during devotions I look to see what if any growth is springing forth. The shoots I know will spring up. Sometimes it takes a bit longer. So much depends upon the balance of sunlight, water, heat, humidity. Often in the early morning hours I overlook the roots pushing down into the glass contain seeking the nourishment of soil and water. It seems like days, even weeks go by and not much seems to have changed. And then one day, all of a sudden, new growth shoots up practically overnight. I missed it because I was busy living life.

Sometimes good news is the hardest to hear and believe in the midst of the business of life. Like now in the midst of a global health crisis. It is in the midst of real life, in the building of a marriage and family and education; in the raising up of children and career and in the repairing of relationships, and houses, and the broken stuff that impacts our lives; while making a way forward that the Word of the Lord calls to us.

That is the situation in which we find ourselves this morning. God is sending us a love letter in Christ Jesus. This one comes to us this Advent season not condemning us for our past unfaithfulness, nor reminding us of our short comings. In the words proclaimed by Isaiah and lived out in the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, God is bringing good news and comfort to people who truly need to hear it. These are words shared with us and with all people who are disheartened, oppressed, broken hearted or held captive.

This Advent season proclaims the comfort that the Word of the Lord is present, that God’s love is being revealed (springing forth), and God’s covenant is being made known. And for that reason there is true joy, and true rejoicing and true love. Not a superficial kind of joy and rejoicing and love, the kind we hear cheerfully touted in holiday tunes or that we see depicted in a made for TV Christmas movie. No, this is the real thing. This is a comforting message; a true love letter from God; a love letter that points to a shared life and a shared future.

This is good news because, like a love letter, a new future is envisioned. The prophet’s comforting words recall God’s everlasting covenant with us, and for us. God clothes us with righteousness in Baptism and invites us as guests to the Eucharistic feast. God is causing joy, rejoicing and love to spring up and we are a part of it.

Amen.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;

²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;

³to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a
faint spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display
his glory.

⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

⁸For I the LORD love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it
to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

Psalm 126

or Luke 1:46b-55

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.