

Reading for January 2019

Sunday January 6th 2019

Isaiah 60:1-6

Jerusalem, stand up! Shine!

Your new day is dawning.

The glory of the LORD

shines brightly on you.

The earth and its people

are covered with darkness,

but the glory of the LORD

is shining upon you.

Nations and kings

will come to the light

of your dawning day.

The LORD said:

Open your eyes! Look around!

Crowds are coming.

Your sons are on their way

from distant lands;

your daughters are being carried

like little children.

When you see this,

your faces will glow;

your hearts will pound

and swell with pride.

Treasures from across the sea

and the wealth of nations

will be brought to you.

Your country will be covered

with caravans

of young camels

from Midian and Ephah.

The people of Sheba

will bring gold and spices

in praise of me, the LORD.

Ephesians 3:1-12

Christ Jesus made me his prisoner, so that I could help you Gentiles. You have surely heard about God's kindness in choosing me to help you. In fact, this letter tells you a little about how God has shown me his mysterious ways. As you read the letter, you will also find out how well I really do understand the mystery about Christ. No one knew about this mystery until God's Spirit told it to his holy apostles and prophets. And the mystery is this: Because of Christ Jesus, the good news has given the Gentiles a share in the promises that God gave to the Jews. God has also let the Gentiles be part of the same body.

God treated me with kindness. His power worked in me, and it became my job to spread the good news. I am the least important of all God's people. But God was kind and chose me to tell the Gentiles that because of Christ there are blessings that cannot be measured. God, who created everything, wanted me to help everyone understand the mysterious plan that had always been hidden in his mind. Then God would use the church to show the powers and authorities in the spiritual world that he has many different kinds of wisdom.

God did this according to his eternal plan. And he was able to do what he had planned because of all that Christ Jesus our Lord had done. Christ now gives us courage and confidence, so that we can come to God by faith.

Matthew 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard about this, he was worried, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?"

They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote,
'Bethlehem in the land
of Judea,
you are very important
among the towns of Judea.
From your town
will come a leader,
who will be like a shepherd
for my people Israel.'"

Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I want to go and worship him too."

The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him. Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

Sunday 13th January 2019

Isaiah 42:1-7

Here is my servant!

I have made him strong.
He is my chosen one;
I am pleased with him.
I have given him my Spirit,
and he will bring justice
to the nations.
He won't shout or yell
or call out in the streets.
He won't break off a bent reed
or put out a dying flame,
but he will make sure
that justice is done.
He won't quit or give up
until he brings justice
everywhere on earth,
and people in foreign nations
long for his teaching.

I am the LORD God.
I created the heavens
like an open tent above.
I made the earth and everything
that grows on it.
I am the source of life
for all who live on this earth,
so listen to what I say.
I chose you to bring justice,
and I am here at your side.
I selected and sent you
to bring light
and my promise of hope

to the nations.
You will give sight
to the blind;
you will set prisoners free
from dark dungeons.

Acts 8:14-17

The apostles in Jerusalem heard that some people in Samaria had accepted God's message, and they sent Peter and John. When the two apostles arrived, they prayed that the people would be given the Holy Spirit. Before this, the Holy Spirit had not been given to anyone in Samaria, though some of them had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Peter and John then placed their hands on everyone who had faith in the Lord, and they were given the Holy Spirit.

Luke 3:15-17,21-22

Everyone became excited and wondered, "Could John be the Messiah?"

John said, "I am just baptizing with water. But someone more powerful is going to come, and I am not good enough even to untie his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His threshing forks in his hand, and he is ready to separate the wheat from the husks. He will store the wheat in his barn and burn the husks with a fire that never goes out."

While everyone else was being baptized, Jesus himself was baptized. Then as he prayed, the sky opened up, and the Holy Spirit came down upon him in the form of a dove. A voice from heaven said, "You are my own dear Son, and I am pleased with you."

Sunday 20th January 2019

Isaiah 62:1-5

Jerusalem, I will speak up
for your good.

I will never be silent
till you are safe and secure,
sparkling like a flame.

Your great victory will be seen
by every nation and king;
the LORD will even give you
a new name.

You will be a glorious crown,
a royal headband,
for the LORD your God.

Your name will no longer be
"Deserted and Childless,"
but "Happily Married."

You will please the LORD;
your country
will be his bride.

Your people will take the land,
just as a young man
takes a bride.

The LORD will be pleased
because of you,
just as a husband is pleased
with his bride.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

My friends, you asked me about spiritual gifts. I want you to remember that before you became followers of the Lord, you were led in all the wrong ways by idols that cannot even talk. Now I want you to know that if you are led by God's Spirit, you will say that Jesus is Lord, and you will never curse Jesus.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but they all come from the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve the same Lord, and we can each do different things. Yet the same God works in all of us and helps us in everything we do.

The Spirit has given each of us a special way of serving others. Some of us can speak with wisdom, while others can speak with knowledge, but these gifts come from the same Spirit. To others the Spirit has given great faith or the power to heal the sick or the power to work mighty miracles. Some of us are prophets, and some of us recognize when God's Spirit is present. Others can speak different kinds of languages, and still others can tell what these languages mean. But it is the Spirit who does all this and decides which gifts to give to each of us.

John 2:1-11

Three days later Mary, the mother of Jesus, was at a wedding feast in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited and were there.

When the wine was all gone, Mary said to Jesus, "They don't have any more wine."

Jesus replied, "Mother, my time hasn't yet come: You must not tell me what to do."

Mary then said to the servants, "Do whatever Jesus tells you to do."

At the feast there were six stone water jars that were used by the people for washing themselves in the way that their religion said they must. Each jar held about twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus told the servants to fill them

to the top with water. Then after the jars had been filled, he said, "Now take some water and give it to the man in charge of the feast."

The servants did as Jesus told them, and the man in charge drank some of the water that had now turned into wine. He did not know where the wine had come from, but the servants did. He called the bridegroom over and said, "The best wine is always served first. Then after the guests have had plenty, the other wine is served. But you have kept the best until last!"

This was Jesus' first miracle, and he did it in the village of Cana in Galilee. There Jesus showed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Sunday 27th January 2019

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

On the first day of the seventh month, the people came together in the open area in front of the Water Gate. Then they asked Ezra, who was a teacher of the Law of Moses, to read to them from this Law that the LORD had given his people. Ezra the priest came with the Law and stood before the crowd of men, women, and the children who were old enough to understand. From early morning till noon, he read the Law of Moses to them, and they listened carefully. Ezra was up on the high platform, where he could be seen by everyone, and when he opened the book, they all stood up. Ezra praised the great LORD God, and the people shouted, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed with their faces to the ground and worshiped the LORD. After this, the Levites Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah went among the people, explaining the meaning of what Ezra had read. The people started crying when God's Law was read to them. Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher, and the Levites who had been teaching the people all said, "This is a special day for the LORD your God. So don't be sad and don't cry!"

Nehemiah told the people, "Enjoy your good food and wine and share some with those who didn't have anything to bring. Don't be sad! This is a special day for the LORD, and he will make you happy and strong."

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

The body of Christ has many different parts, just as any other body does. Some of us are Jews, and others are Gentiles. Some of us are slaves, and others are free. But God's Spirit baptized each of us and made us part of the body of Christ. Now we each drink from that same Spirit.

Our bodies don't have just one part. They have many parts. Suppose a foot says, "I'm not a hand, and so I'm not part of the body." Wouldn't the foot still belong to the body? Or suppose an ear says, "I'm not an eye, and so I'm not part of the body." Wouldn't the ear still belong to the body? If our bodies were only an eye, we couldn't hear a thing. And if they were only an ear, we couldn't smell a thing. But God has put all parts of our body together in the way that he decided is best.

A body isn't really a body, unless there is more than one part. It takes many parts to make a single body. That's why the eyes cannot say they don't need the hands. That's also why the head cannot say it doesn't need the feet. In fact, we cannot get along without the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest. We take special care to dress up some parts of our bodies. We are modest about our personal parts, but we don't have to be modest about other parts.

God put our bodies together in such a way that even the parts that seem the least important are valuable. He did this to make all parts of the body work together smoothly, with each part caring about the others. If one part of our body hurts, we hurt all over. If one part of our body is honored, the whole body will be happy.

Together you are the body of Christ. Each one of you is part of his body. First, God chose some people to be apostles and prophets and teachers for the church. But he also chose some to work miracles or heal the sick or help others or be leaders or speak different kinds of languages. Not everyone is an apostle. Not everyone is a prophet. Not everyone is a teacher. Not everyone can work miracles. Not everyone can

heal the sick. Not everyone can speak different kinds of languages. Not everyone can tell what these languages mean. I want you to desire the best gifts. So I will show you a much better way.

Luke 4:14-21

Jesus returned to Galilee with the power of the Spirit. News about him spread everywhere. He taught in the Jewish meeting places, and everyone praised him.

Jesus went back to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and as usual he went to the meeting place on the Sabbath. When he stood up to read from the Scriptures, he was given the book of Isaiah the prophet. He opened it and read,

“The Lord’s Spirit
has come to me,
because he has chosen me
to tell the good news
to the poor.
The Lord has sent me
to announce freedom
for prisoners,
to give sight to the blind,
to free everyone
who suffers,
and to say, ‘This is the year
the Lord has chosen.’”

Jesus closed the book, then handed it back to the man in charge and sat down. Everyone in the meeting place looked straight at Jesus.

Then Jesus said to them, “What you have just heard me read has come true today.”