

December 31, 2023  
1st Sunday of Christmas

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

As the new year begins.....  
Do your little bit of good where you are.  
It's those little bits of good put together  
that overwhelm the world.

Desmond Tutu

## HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

**Prelude** Once in royal David's city

Robert B. Farley

**Processional** God rest ye, merry gentlemen

Hymnal # 105

### The Word of God

#### Opening Sentences

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

**And we beheld His glory.**

#### A Collect for Purity *in unison*

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Hymn of Praise** Joy to the World

Hymnal # 100

#### The Collect of the day

Eternal Father, you gave to your incarnate Son the holy name of Jesus to be the sign of our salvation: Plant in every heart, we pray, the love of him who is the Savior of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**

#### The Lessons

##### Introduction

*The psalmist calls on the natural world, celestial bodies, fire and earth, creatures, and all humanity, to praise God. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon's song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God's salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we tell of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.*

### **First Reading: Isaiah 61:10—62:3**

*To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that God's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.*

<sup>10</sup>I 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.

<sup>11</sup>For 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.

<sup>62:1</sup>For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,  
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,  
and her salvation like a burning torch.

<sup>2</sup>The nations shall see your vindication,  
and all the kings your glory;  
and you shall be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

<sup>3</sup>You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,  
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### **Psalm 148 Laudate Dominum**

1 Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens; \*  
praise him in the heights.

2 Praise him, all you angels of his; \*  
praise him, all his host.

3 Praise him, sun and moon; \*  
praise him, all you shining stars.

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 stand 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 fog, \*  
tempestuous wind, doing his will;

9 Mountains and all hills, \*  
fruit trees and all cedars;  
10 Wild beasts and all cattle, \*  
creeping things and wingèd birds;  
11 Kings of the earth and all peoples, \*  
princes and all rulers of the world;  
12 Young men and maidens, \*  
old and young together.  
13 Let them praise the Name of the LORD, \*  
for his Name only is exalted, his splendor is over earth and heaven.  
14 He has raised up strength for his people and praise for all his loyal servants, \*  
the children of Israel, a people who are near him. Hallelujah!  
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

### **Second Reading: Galatians 4:4-7**

*Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as beloved children.*

<sup>4</sup>When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. <sup>6</sup>And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

The word of the Lord...**thanks be to God**

### **Gospel: Luke 2:22-40**

*Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.*

The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Luke.. **Glory to you, Lord Christ**

<sup>22</sup>When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, [Joseph and Mary] brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup>and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

<sup>25</sup>Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup>"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;

<sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup>And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a

sword will pierce your own soul too.”

<sup>36</sup>There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

<sup>39</sup>When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

The Gospel of the Lord.           **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

**Sermon:** The Rev. Dr. Susan Claytor

### **The Nicene Creed**

*in unison*

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

### **The Prayers of the People**

*from Intercessions for a Christian People*

Brothers and sisters, God has pitched a tent in our midst. God’s Word has taken our flesh. That all may know God’s presence bringing us together, it is fitting that our flesh should call to God in holy words of petition, saying: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

That the feet of each of us might be made beautiful through our proclamation of peace at table, desk, and lathe, as well as in every place where violence threatens, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

That the Word which conquers darkness might enlighten the blindness which keeps Christ’s followers separated and at odds, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**



Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts. Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him.

Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom. All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ: By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours,  
Almighty Father, now and for ever. **Amen.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say *in unison*

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, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### **The Breaking of the Bread**

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

**Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.**

**Fraction Anthem** *in unison* tune: Greensleeves

O Lamb of God, O holy child who takes the sins of the world away, have mercy on us, Lamb of God, the babe, the Son, of Mary. This, this is Christ's own blood and body given the gift from heaven; take, eat for we are one, in Christ, the Son, of Mary.

### **Invitation to Communion**

*The music during communion is provided by our organist Donna Burnside*

*Spiritual communion prayer*

**Post Communion Prayer** *in unison* (kneeling as you are able)

God our Father, whose Word has come among us in the Holy Child of Bethlehem: in this season you have made known to us again the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ through the gift of the Sacrament of His body and Blood, confirm our faith and fix our eyes on him so the light of faith may illumine our hearts and shine in our words and deeds; through him who is Christ the Lord. Amen.  
*from the Irish Anglican Church*

**Recessional** Angels from the realms of glory

Hymnal 93

**Dismissal** Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude** I saw three ships

Anna Laura Page