

Second Sunday After Christmas

Occasion:

Sunday, January 5 2020

Year (cycle): A, B, and C

Resource Website Links:

[The Collect/Readings¹](#)

[Book/Passage Summaries²](#)

[Reflection Question\(s\)³](#)

[Art Reflection Slideshow⁴](#)

**Note: Due to "optional readings," Passage summaries and Slideshows do not always fully correspond with the chosen readings for a given week. Disregard or expand your study when this is the case.*

The Collect:

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Reading 1

Old Testament: Jeremiah 31: 7-14

7 For thus says the Lord:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
'Save, O Lord, your people,
the remnant of Israel.'

8 See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,
those with child and those in labour, together;
a great company, they shall return here.

9 With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,

in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.
10 Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock.'
11 For the Lord has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
12 They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.
13 Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
14 I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the Lord.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): Jeremiah 31: 7-14

Sometimes it is easy to lose sight of what is really important in life. The people of God have struggled to keep their end of the covenant with God, and every time they stray, disaster befalls them. In the Deuteronomic Code, they have been given numerous and detailed examples for how to love their God, yet Jeremiah has spent almost 30 chapters demonstrating that their repeated failures to love God as their God loves them has brought them into ruin and exile. At the end of Jeremiah, however, he assures them that God has not forgotten them. No matter how many times God's people stray and forget to love their God, God remembers them and will always bring them back into the covenant that was promised to them.

In our own lives, it is easy to become distracted by all the things in the world that pull on us. Sometimes, it is only when we lose something that is

really important that we realize how valuable it was. Fortunately, we have been assured that God will always be ready to welcome us back when we get distracted, and it is never too late to remember God's love for us.

- When have you found yourself so distracted that you missed what was truly important in life?
- What is it like to only realize something is important when it's gone?
- How can you remind yourself that God will always be waiting to take you back?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 2

Psalm: 84

- 1 How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! *
My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of
the Lord;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.
- 2 The sparrow has found her a house
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; *
by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.
- 3 Happy are they who dwell in your house! *
they will always be praising you.
- 4 Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.
- 5 Those who go through the desolate valley will find
it a place of springs, *
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.
- 6 They will climb from height to height, *
and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.
- 7 Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; *
hearken, O God of Jacob.
- 8 Behold our defender, O God; *
and look upon the face of your Anointed.
- [9 For one day in your courts is better than
a thousand in my own room, *
and to stand at the threshold of the house of my God

than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.
10 For the Lord God is both sun and shield; *
he will give grace and glory;
11 No good thing will the Lord withhold *
from those who walk with integrity.
12 O Lord of hosts, *
happy are they who put their trust in you!]

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): Psalm 84

It is important to recognize the little joys in life. In this psalm, the people are shouting for joy in praise of God because they know what it means to see and hold onto what is important. They do not need to be the king or have great material wealth to be happy, because they can rest in comfort in the love of their God. They know what it feels like to be away from that which they love most, and they are sure to give great thanks when they have it close to them once again.

We are often pulled by the world into thinking we need the fastest cars, the biggest TVs, the trendiest vacations, or the fattest bank accounts. In reality, the greatest joys in life come from the smallest, simplest moments of spending time with a dear friend, coming home after a long journey, or being comforted in the arms of a loved one. The flashy things fail to fulfill us when love and relationship are missing. God has created a world for us in which the greatest happiness can be found in unassuming places, so don't forget to seek them out and be thankful when you have them.

- What does it feel like to be without something you hold dear, then to have it back again?
- Do you remember to give thanks for what you have when you have it?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 3

Epistle: Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

4just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. 5He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will,6to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason 16I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a

Being a good person is how we live out our joy and thanksgiving, not a way of paying God for what we have. When Paul is greeting the church in Ephesus, he is quick to praise them for how faithfully and richly they are living out their Christian lives. He is equally as quick to remind them that they have already been assured that they are God's beloved people whom Christ has saved once and for all. Paul acclaims the people of Ephesus and wants to them keep doing good work, remembering that they are not buying God's love (because it has already been freely given to them) but they are instead showing thanks for God's love in the way they live their lives.

When we go out into the world to live out our call as Christians, we have two choices: We can love all people and spread the Gospel of the Lord because we are trying to pay God back for what has been freely done for us; or we can love all people and spread the Gospel of the Lord because we are thankful and joyous and this is how we want to live our lives in response. The first way diminishes our relationship with God into one of a mere transaction. It is far more meaningful to let our gratitude to God be demonstrated in the lives of love we live out in the world.

- When someone gives you a great gift, do you try to pay them for it?
- How can you demonstrate your gratitude for someone's gift to you?

- How can you demonstrate your gratitude for God's love for you?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 4

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

13 Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' 14 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

19 When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 20 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.' 21 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. 23 There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He will be called a Nazorean.'

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

When we have been given great gifts in life, it is important not to forget those who are suffering or living in want. Right in the midst of the birth narrative of Jesus Christ – the great gift that God has given us to be reconciled and healed – is a terrible tragedy that should not be missed. A great many lectionaries, including this one, skip past the story of the massacring of the innocent infants by Herod, in his attempt to kill the Messiah. It is a story that makes us uncomfortable, sad, mad, and is not in keeping with the happy story of Jesus' birth into the world. Yet we cannot ever forget that, even as someone is experiencing great joy, someone else is in pain.

We need to give thanks to God for the joys and great blessings we experience in our lives, and it certainly is right to do so. Give thanks, but do not forget those who are homeless and hungry, lost and alone, dying and ill, persecuted and victimized. We are called to do the hard work in this world of being thankful while yet seeing there is much healing that needs to be done, resting in God's love while yet seeing that we need to challenge injustices in the world, finding joy in Jesus' birth while yet wrestling with human sin.

- When has wrongdoing in the world kept you from feeling joy?
- When has joy in the world kept you from noticing wrongdoing?
- What can you do to balance being joyful about gifts and diligent about injustice around you?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Sources

¹ “Second Sunday After Christmas, ” *The Episcopal Church*, <https://episcopalchurch.org/lectionary/second-sunday-after-christmas>

² Chris Haslam, “Second Sunday After Christmas-January 5, 2020,” *Comments: Revised Lectionary Commentary*, <http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/zxms2m.shtml>

³Stephen M. Balke, Jr., “Christmas 2-January 5, 2020”, *Bible Study*, <https://episcopalchurch.org/library/bible-study/bible-study-christmas-2-january-5-2020>

⁴ The Revised Common Lectionary, “Year A, Year B, Year C,” *Slideshow Formats*, <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/slides.php>