

Worship at Home – January 25, 2026

Good Day!

Announcements

* Monday at the Movies will NOT meet due to the forecasted cold weather and snow

* Tech Team will meet Wednesday, January 28 at 6:30 P.M., however, team members please check your email for possible cancellation due to weather.

Please join me in worship.

Introduction

Jesus begins his public ministry by calling fishers to leave their nets and follow him. In Jesus the kingdom of God has come near. We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. We see this light most profoundly in the cross—as God suffers with us and all who are oppressed by sickness, sin, or evil. Light dawns for us as we gather around the word, the font, and the holy table. We are then sent to share the good news that others may be “caught” in the net of God’s grace and mercy.

The Hymn: “Thy Strong Word” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKN8vO6EqWw>

The Lord be with you.

Let us pray:

Lord God, your lovingkindness always goes before us and follows after us. Summon us into your light, and direct our steps in the ways of goodness that come through the cross of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4

The northern tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali experienced the gloom of defeat by Assyrian military forces, but they are assured that their condition will be reversed when God makes a light-filled appearance. The joy they will experience will resemble celebrations of great harvests, because God will deliver them from everything that diminishes or oppresses them.

1 There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time [the LORD] brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

2 The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

3 You have multiplied exultation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

4 For the yoke of their burden
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
Word of God, Word of Life.
Thanks be to God.

Psalm 27:1, 4-9

The LORD is my light and my salvation. (Ps. 27:1)

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
4 One thing I ask of the LORD; one thing I seek;
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life; to gaze upon the
beauty of the LORD and to seek God in the temple.
5 For in the day of trouble God will give me shelter,
hide me in the hidden places of the sanctuary, and raise me high upon a rock.
6 Even now my head is lifted up above my enemies who surround me.
Therefore I will offer sacrifice in the sanctuary, sacrifices of rejoicing; I will sing and
make music | to the LORD.
7 Hear my voice, O LORD, when I call;
have mercy on me and answer me.
8 My heart speaks your message—"Seek my face."
Your face, O LORD, I will seek.
9 Hide not your face from me, turn not away from your servant in anger.
Cast me not away—you have been my helper; forsake me not, O God of my salvation.

Second Lesson: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Paul calls on the Corinthians to end their dissensions and share the unified outlook of the gospel. Discord arises when we forget that we belong not to human leaders or institutions but to Christ. Indeed, the unifying word of the cross of Christ is the center of the gospel and the power of God's salvation.

10 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you but that you be knit together in the same mind and the same purpose. 11 For it has been made clear to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. 12 What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." 13 Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do

not know whether I baptized anyone else. 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel—and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. 18 For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
Word of God, Word of Life.
Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Saint Matthew 4:12-23

Jesus begins his public ministry shortly after John the Baptist is imprisoned by Herod. He proclaims the nearness of God's reign and calls four fishermen to be his first disciples.

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

15 “Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles—
16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.”

17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and 5 Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. 19 And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.” 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

23 Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Meditation

We commonly make reference to Sunday's three Scripture readings. But there are four. We tend to neglect the Psalm following the first reading. We call it a "Responsorial Psalm," meaning it has been chosen as a response to the first reading – and it has. But that makes it sound like a lesser scriptural passage, i.e. just a "response." The Psalms are not "lesser," possessing second-class status in the Bible. Let's look at the Psalm chosen for today's "Response." It's part of Psalm 27.

Psalms often have titles which state their "theme." Psalm 27 is called a "Psalm of Confidence." It certainly does express confidence in God and is appropriate during the season between Advent/Christmas and Lent. In the Common Lectionary these Sundays are counted as "Sundays After the Epiphany." Epiphany means "showing." In Advent we longed for the light of Christ. In Lent we will enter the stark wilderness longing for forgiveness. But for now, we celebrate "Epiphany" – God's light, revelation, "showing." What we hoped for in Advent is now

at hand. As our first reading proclaims, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shown."

People tend to think of the "God of the Old Testament" as angry and vengeful. They welcome Jesus' arrival as a softening of God's heart towards us. Psalm 27 is, just one of the many texts in the Hebrew Scriptures that show us that thinking of our God as angry and vengeful is not correct. The psalmist expresses trust and confidence in God and longs to dwell in the house of the Lord "all the days of my life." And more. Just dwelling in God's courts is not enough. The one praying the Psalm longs to see God face-to-face. No one wants a face-to-face experience with a cruel and judgmental God. In this prayer we can express a longing for a God of grace and goodness. The psalmist encourages us to wait for the Lord. The expectation is that the one who longs for God will be satisfied. God does not stand far off and just observe us, but satisfies our longing. The wait is well worth it.

But all is not sweetness and pretty flowers. We can tell that real life is the background to this Psalm. It expresses confidence in God when something, or someone, is threatening that confidence, "The Lord is my light and my salvation whom should I fear?" It is a reminder that God has been present in hard times and is present now to help us face our struggles. We don't know what fears the psalmist had. But we can certainly know the difficulties we face. Somehow, even in the face of our fears, God is already our "refuge" – a safe and secure hiding place. We name the hard times we face as we pray this Psalm today and express confidence in our trustworthy God, as well as a longing to "gaze on the loveliness of the Lord" in some real confidence-building way.

Jesus hears that Herod has arrested John the Baptist. The voice that roamed the desert calling people to, "Prepare the way of the Lord," has been silenced, locked in a prison cell. After John has been silenced Jesus' voice is heard proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus doesn't run and hide despite the danger. He takes his message to Galilee, which was ruled by Herod. Matthew quotes Isaiah, "The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light." John is in prison, but you can't imprison the Word of God which brings light to the "land of gloom."

Jesus preaches "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." God is present and acting in a new way through Jesus. But in order to receive the message of life Jesus offers people, they must "repent." They must change their minds, examine how they think and act. Do we find ourselves in some way sitting in darkness; dwelling in the land of gloom? Are we stuck in old ways of thinking, our imagination closed to the new possibilities which God's presence can bring to fulfillment? Jesus invites us to think differently, leave behind the ways of "the land of gloom." God's kingdom is now; new life is being offered to those who will accept it.

Jesus begins his preaching and healing ministry, but he can't do it by himself. He needs to invite others to join him. Based on their achievements the first fishers didn't have much to offer in service to the Lord. They could bring the skills learned as fishers – patience, hope and perseverance. In a way they also had to "repent," put aside their limited ways of thinking and

with Jesus have a change of mind and heart. They will be with Jesus and what they learn from being with him they will also share with others.

Symbolic of the disciples' willingness to change is their leaving behind family and possessions. They will have a new family with Jesus and their former possessions will not be needed to do their mission of being "fishers of people."

One has to admire their initial enthusiasm and the spontaneity of their response to Jesus. But they are human and their dedication and loyalty will falter – especially when Jesus is taken prisoner and executed. Like us, they will need to remember that Jesus' invitation to "repent" is offered each time they falter as followers. They were disappointed in Jesus; it didn't turn out the way they hoped. It often doesn't. But Jesus doesn't give up on them – or us – and always welcomes us back when we "repent." We choose gloom and darkness even when light and life are offered to us.

We don't have to be avid and knowledgeable Scripture readers to have heard today's gospel before. "I will make you fishers of people." We might even think to ourselves, "This doesn't apply to me, I'm a Christian and one of Christ's followers."

It's not only a Scripture passage recalling a past event in the lives of the disciples. Following Jesus is not a once-for-all decision. It has to be renewed at each stage of our lives. Even daily: We may choose today to cheat a little at work; ignore the neighbor in need; close our ears to someone asking for help; not speak or act out of our commitment to Jesus etc. It may be a familiar passage. But it is not an echo from a past age, rather it is very much for today. Do we hear Jesus saying to us today, "Come after me and I will make you fishers of people?" We repent from what is the delaying our response to get up and follow him again and again. Again the choice is before us to put the past and its attachments aside and follow Jesus.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son +, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

We Pray:

As God's beloved children united in Christ, let us pray for the church, the whole human community, and the well-being of the earth, our home.

Holy One, you entrust the message of the cross and the mission of the gospel to the church in every land. Guide the newly baptized and deepen the faith of all who follow Christ. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

Holy Creator, you lavish creation with splendor, and we praise you for the gift of life. Teach us to live as wise stewards, sharing the earth's resources with all inhabitants of this garden planet. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

Holy Judge, your power is love, and you judge the nations by the measure of Christ. Free any who are unjustly accused or wrongly condemned. We pray for those in authority Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Holy Lover, you care for vulnerable young children, frail elders, and any who are sick especially for Sharon, Bev, Charlie, Audrey, Bill, Joan, Judy, Keith, Sherry, Mark, and those we name before you now. We pray for all who are affected by natural disasters. Provide for their needs and relieve their suffering. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

Holy Giver, you gather, forgive, and shape us as disciples of Christ. Nurture in us a spirit of patience and respect, that we may love one another as you love us. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

God of Peace, by your Holy Spirit, kindle hope that does not disappoint and peace that surpasses all understanding. We entrust Venezuela, its people and your church into your loving hands, trusting not in our own strength but in your steadfast love made known in Jesus Christ, who is our peace. Merciful God. receive our prayer.

Sustaining God, we live in a time of great anxiety and uncertainty. We pray for those people and places where there is tension and discord, especially Minneapolis and the cities and people where ICE is actively at work; and for the people of Greenland and Denmark, for the Church of Greenland and Bishop Paneeraq Siegstad Mjnk, the church of Denmark and the Rt. Revd. Henrik Stubkjaer. Bring peace and harmony. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

Holy Savior, you free us from the power of death. Lead and guide us until we come at last into the communion of all your saints in light. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

Confident that the Holy Spirit receives our prayers and answers us, we commend all for whom we pray to God's loving-kindness made known to us in Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen

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.

The blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son + and Holy Spirit be with you now and always.