

BIBLE READINGS for Sunday 3 January 2021

Jeremiah 31:7-14

This is what the Lord says:

‘Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations.

Make your praises heard, and say,

“Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel.”

See, I will bring them from the land of the north

and gather them from the ends of the earth.

Among them will be the blind and the lame,

expectant mothers and women in labour;

a great throng will return.

They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back.

I will lead them beside streams of water

on a level path where they will not stumble,

because I am Israel’s father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son.

‘Hear the word of the Lord, you nations;

proclaim it in distant coastlands:

“He who scattered Israel will gather them

and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.”

For the Lord will deliver Jacob

and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they.

They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion;

they will rejoice in the bounty of the Lord – the grain, the new wine and the olive oil, the young of the flocks and herds.

They will be like a well-watered garden,

and they will sorrow no more.

Then young women will dance and be glad,

young men and old as well.

I will turn their mourning into gladness;

I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.

I will satisfy the priests with abundance,

and my people will be filled with my bounty,’ declares the Lord.

Ephesians 1:3-14

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

John 1:10-18

He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'" From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.