

Sunday, January 25, 2026 - Third Sunday after the Epiphany

First Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4

The northern tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali experienced the gloom of defeat by Assyrian military forces. But here they are assured that their condition will be reversed.

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.

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.

The Gospel writer Matthew quotes these verses and interprets them as being fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus, whom Christians see as described in verses 6-7 –

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.

Psalm: Psalm 27:1, 4-9

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?

Romans 8: 31 – If God is for us, who is against us?

*This Psalm is identified as a psalm of David. David had many reasons to be afraid.
What fears are you able to face knowing that God is with you and for you?
What fears do you still need help from God to be able to face?*

5 - For in the day of trouble God will give me shelter and raise me high up on a rock.

When has that been your experience?

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.

*Cf. Psalm 51: 11 – written after David's great sin against Bathsheba and Uriah –
Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
David knew what had happened to Saul when God took His Spirit away from Saul.
David knew that if the same were to happen to him, he would not have a chance.*

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

*Paul calls on the Corinthians to end their dissensions. Discord had arisen because they had forgotten that they do not belong to human leaders or institutions but to Christ.
Last week we suggested - based upon verse 26 – that a primary reason why the Corinthians got into so much conflict was because of their personal insecurities.*

10-11 - Now I appeal to you, 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 united in the same mind

and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you.

12-13 - Each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

What are some of the primary causes for division within the church today?

Which of these divisions are valid and appropriate?

Which of these divisions are ungodly, self-centered, selfish, and petty?

18 - 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.

The Greeks valued wisdom. How can the message about the cross seem like foolishness?

Matthew 4:12-23

12-16 - Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—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."

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

In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) the main message of Jesus is that the kingdom of heaven (the kingdom of God in Mark and Luke) has come near.

Through His preaching, delivering, and healing Jesus demonstrated that the powers of the future are already active in the present.

The love, grace, healing, deliverance from the powers of evil, and deliverance from death that we will someday know in full we can now experience in part.

18-20 - As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

I believe that the first time Simon Peter and Andrew met Jesus was in John 1, one hundred miles to the south, where Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. When they met Jesus, they wanted to learn more about Jesus, so Jesus said, "Come and see." Here they meet Jesus again back up north on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where they were earning a living through fishing. This time Jesus says, "Follow me."

21-22 - 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. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Mark 1: 20 – They left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.