

**Anthea Kenna**  
**Second Sunday of Christmas Reflection**  
**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2021**  
**Happy New Year**

***Jesus Christ is the Light of the World, a light which no darkness can quench***



***Reveal among us the light of your presence that we may behold your power and glory***

Light of life, you came in flesh,  
born into human pain and joy,  
and gave us power to be your children.  
Grant us faith, O Christ, to see your presence among us,  
so that all of creation may sing new songs of gladness  
and walk in the way of peace.

**Amen.**

**Reading - Jeremiah 31:7-14 (NIV)**

<sup>7</sup>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.’

<sup>8</sup>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.

<sup>9</sup>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.

<sup>10</sup>“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.’

<sup>11</sup> For the Lord will deliver Jacob  
and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they.  
<sup>12</sup> 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.  
<sup>13</sup> 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.  
<sup>14</sup> I will satisfy the priests with abundance,  
and my people will be filled with my bounty,”  
declares the Lord.

### **Reflection**

Since before Christmas Day we have been bombarded with statements such as ‘The Sales are On!’, ‘Shop Now’, ‘Save 20% or £15 on your next order and ‘Get Ready for 2021!’. However, getting ready for 2021 presents many unknowns with continued uncertainties and anxieties. We face a post Brexit Britain and rising cases of various variants of Covid yet we gain hope from the production of vaccinations and look forward to a Spring based on hope of better things to come.

The readings for the Second Sunday of Christmas share a common theme of praise and thanksgiving, resonating with images of the story of salvation. Jeremiah offers gratitude for the return of the Exiles even though he acknowledges that not all who left are alive to return and the experience of exile was bitter. Psalm 147 calls on the citizens of Jerusalem to praise God for all the blessings of living in that city. The writers of Ephesians and John list the blessings that are bestowed on us through Christ, the Word “made flesh” for us in a manger. Together they offer an opportunity to look back over 2020 (which was about as mixed a blessing as the return of the Exiles) with both honesty and gratitude and to look ahead to the new year with hope that God’s larger good vision will prevail, in spite of whatever immediate problems or joys come our way in 2021.

Jeremiah was often seen as a prophet with the daunting challenge to deliver bad news. God called Jeremiah as his prophet for his people and he served during the reigns of the last Kings of Judah. These kings were seen as wicked and unfaithful, worshiping false gods and leading the nation to worship these false gods. God’s call and mission for Jeremiah was crystal clear. "See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10). For the most part, the preaching of Jeremiah was not going to be pleasant. Yet today’s text has a message of hope.

Whilst Jeremiah was called to proclaim judgement in the words, “uproot, tear down, destroy” he was also called to “build and to plant”. Jeremiah plants a message of hope but only God makes this hope grow in us and for others and only God’s hope can bring Joy. The return of God’s people would bring out songs and hymns of praise – a time of great rejoicing.

Christmas is the season of celebration in the Christian year in which we rejoice at the love and grace represented by the Incarnation. But it is also a time to begin reflecting on the nature of

the community that is called into being by such an act of God in the world. We will spend the rest of the church year coping with change, reflecting and coming to terms with what it means to be the people of God, the community of faith that God has chosen to create in the world.

Even on this second Sunday of Christmas, as the biblical texts still reflect the celebration and joy, as we still proclaim the nature of this God who has entered our human condition and revealed his heart in a manager, we also begin to realize that we are being called to respond.

So, on this Sunday, we may take this path as it links the pure joy at the magnitude of the event that we are celebrating with the sense of hope for a new beginning that it brings. A sense that this new beginning is going somewhere, and that it may just require something of us.

*Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour and my hope is in you all day long. Psalm 25: 4-5*

### **Worship Music**

Born in the Night, Mary's Child

[https://youtu.be/gP2\\_amxU9vY](https://youtu.be/gP2_amxU9vY)

Shine Jesus, Shine

<https://youtu.be/J3iB30gCqAc>

Who would think that what was needed

<https://youtu.be/MwCyLamhFrk>

Joy to the World

<https://youtu.be/rIEZFC869Ts>

### **Intersessions**

God has blessed creation with a great variety of gifts  
and gathered all people into one family,  
so that in sharing, we might strengthen  
and be strengthened by one another.  
We gather into our hearts and minds  
the universe entrusted to us,  
remembering its needs before God and this company.

We give you thanks for life and the experience life brings us. We thank you for our joys, sorrows, trials, failures and triumphs. We praise you for our country its beauty, the riches it has for us and the gifts it showers on us. We thank you for your people, the skills of research and the gift of vaccination, the joy of languages we speak, the variety of races we have, the cultural heritage we cherish. Grant that we accept these gifts with thankfulness and use them for the good of the human race and to bring glory to you.

We pray for a world in which even ordinary humanity fails so often. In the time of post-Brexit, we pray for government ministers in every nation. We pray that those who lead and take on great responsibilities may genuinely serve their people, searching continually for policies and strategies which will be for the good of all, especially for the weakest and most vulnerable.

We pray for our schools and all who serve in them as they prepare for the coming term with the many challenges they face. Give them strength and wisdom in their support of their communities.

We pray for the victims of war, violence and natural disasters; for all who suffer and especially the children; for the multitudes in every country who are ready to walk the road of peace. Grant us insight and strength so that we may always respond to hatred with love, to injustice with total dedication to justice, to need with the willingness to share, to war with peace.

As the weather turns colder, we pray especially for the homeless, the elderly and housebound, and all those living alone. Help us to be good neighbours, looking out for those who may be in need this winter and reaching out as individuals and as a church community to do what we can to relieve their misery and suffering.

Hear our prayer Lord, for people who are ill, in hospitals, at home, or wherever they may be. Give them courage, hope and peace, and the knowledge that you are present in their weakness, pain and suffering. May the skills and knowledge of those who care for the sick be fully used to help and to heal.

We pray for those whose hearts have been saddened by the death of someone close and dear to them. Give to them the strong comfort which no one else can give, and let them know the comforting power of the resurrection of Jesus.

Grant that these prayers, O God,  
may be made real by our commitment not only to pray them,  
but to live them in your Son's name. **Amen.**

*We take a moment to lift the prayers of our own hearts before God...*

**We commend ourselves, those for whom we pray and the whole of creation to your unending love and protection**

God our Father,  
in love you sent your Son  
that the world may have life:  
lead us to seek him among the outcast  
and to find him in those in need,  
for Jesus Christ's sake. **Amen.**

Joining all our prayers together we say the prayer our saviour taught us:

**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 them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

### **Blessing**

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary,  
fill you with his grace to trust his promises and obey his will;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

