

# Readings for 17<sup>th</sup> December 2023

*(from New International Version bible)*

## Psalm 126

<sup>1</sup> When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. <sup>2</sup> Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." <sup>3</sup> The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. <sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev. <sup>5</sup> Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. <sup>6</sup> Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

## A reading from Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

<sup>1</sup> The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,<sup>3</sup> and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. <sup>4</sup> They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

<sup>8</sup> "For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them. <sup>9</sup> Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed." <sup>10</sup> I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. <sup>11</sup> For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

## A reading from 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. <sup>19</sup> Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Do not treat prophecies with contempt <sup>21</sup> but test them all; hold on to what is good, <sup>22</sup> reject every kind of evil. <sup>23</sup> May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

## A reading from the Gospel of John 1:6-8,19-28

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

<sup>19</sup> Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. <sup>20</sup> He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup> They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." <sup>22</sup> Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup> John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" <sup>24</sup> Now the Pharisees who had been sent <sup>25</sup> questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" <sup>26</sup> "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. <sup>27</sup> He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." <sup>28</sup> This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.