

Readings for 25th December 2023

(from New International Version bible)

Psalm 97

¹ The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. ² Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. ³ Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. ⁴ His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles. ⁵ The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶ The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all peoples see his glory. ⁷ All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols— worship him, all you gods! ⁸ Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments, Lord. ⁹ For you, Lord, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods. ¹⁰ Let those who love the Lord hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked. ¹¹ Light shines on the righteous and joy on the upright in heart. ¹² Rejoice in the Lord, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.

A reading from Isaiah 62:6-12

⁶ I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, ⁷ and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth. ⁸ The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: "Never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies, and never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled; ⁹ but those who harvest it will eat it and praise the Lord, and those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary." ¹⁰ Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations. ¹¹ The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your Savior comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.'" ¹² They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted.

A reading from Titus 3:4-7

⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

A reading from the Gospel of Luke 2:1-20

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register. ⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. ⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." ¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." ¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.