December 6, 2026

First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11

In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God.

1 Comfort, O comfort my people,
  says your God.
2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
  and cry to her
that she has served her term,
  that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the Lord's hand
  double for all her sins.

3 A voice cries out:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
  make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
4 Every valley shall be lifted up,
  and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
  and the rough places a plain.
5 Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
  and all flesh shall see it together,
  for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

6 A voice says, "Cry out!"
  And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All flesh is grass;
  their constancy is like the flower of the field.
7 The grass withers; the flower fades,
  [[when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
  surely the people are grass.
8 The grass withers; the flower fades,]]
  but the word of our God will stand forever.
9 Get you up to a high mountain,
  O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
  O Jerusalem, herald of good news;

lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"
10 See, the Lord God comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him
and his recompense before him.
11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms
and carry them in his bosom
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Psalm: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

1 You have been gracious to your land, O Lord;
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.
2 **You have forgiven the iniquity of your people**
and blotted out all their sins.
8 I will listen to what the Lord God is saying;
for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.
9 **Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you,**
that your glory may dwell in our land.
10 Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
11 **Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth,**
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
12 The Lord will indeed grant prosperity,
and our land will yield its increase.
13 **Righteousness shall go before the Lord**
and shall prepare for God a pathway.

Second Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-15a

This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God.

8 But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. 9 The Lord is not

slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. [10] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

[11] Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, [12] waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and destroyed and the elements will melt with fire? [13] But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

[14] Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish, [15a] and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.

[1] The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.

[2] As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way,
[3] the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight,' "

[4] so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [5] And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. [6] Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. [7] He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. [8] I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

December 13, 2026

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

[1] The spirit of the Lord God is upon me
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives
and release to the prisoners,
[2] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
[3] to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
[4] They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

[8] For I, the Lord, love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
[9] Their descendants shall be known among the nations
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.
[10] I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;
my whole being shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;

he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

Psalm: Psalm 126

1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
then were we like those who dream.
2 **Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.**
Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."
3 The Lord has done great things for us,
and we are glad indeed.
4 **Restore our fortunes, O Lord,**
like the watercourses of the Negeb.
5 Those who sowed with tears
will reap with songs of joy.
6 **Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,**
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast to what is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.
23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.

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

19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and
Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed and did
not deny it, but he confessed, "I am not the Messiah." 21 And they asked him,
"What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He
answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an
answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord,' "

as the prophet Isaiah said.

24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 They asked him, "Why,
then, are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the
prophet?" 26 John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands
one whom you do not know, 27 the one who is coming after me; I am not
worthy to untie the strap of his sandal." 28 This took place in Bethany across
the Jordan where John was baptizing.

December 20, 2026

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

1 Now when the king was settled in his house and the Lord had given him
rest from all his enemies around him, 2 the king said to the prophet Nathan,
"See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent."
3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind, for the Lord is
with you."
4 But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, 5 "Go and tell
my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house
to live in? 6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people
of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and
a tabernacle. 7 Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel,
did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I
commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built
me a house of cedar?' 8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant
David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from
following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel, 9 and I have been
with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before
you, and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones
of the earth. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant
them, so that they may live in their own place and be disturbed no more,
and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I
appointed judges over my people Israel, and I will give you rest from all
your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make
you a house. 16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever
before me; your throne shall be established forever."

Psalm: Luke 1:46b-55

46b My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
47 my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 **for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.**

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
49 you, the Almighty, have done great things for me
and holy is your name.
50 **You have mercy on those who fear you,**
from generation to generation.
51 You have shown strength with your arm
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
52 **casting down the mighty from their thrones**
and lifting up the lowly.
53 You have filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
54 **You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,**
to remember the promise of mercy,
55 the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and his children forever.

Second Reading: Romans 16:25-27

Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

25 Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the
proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that
was kept secret for long ages 26 but is now disclosed and through the
prophetic writings is made known to all the gentiles, according to the
command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—27 to the
only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee
called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of
the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and
said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was much
perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

30 The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor
with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and
you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the
Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor
David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom
there will be no end.” 34 Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am
a virgin?” 35 The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and
the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be
born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative
Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month
for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with
God.” 38 Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with
me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

December 24, 2026

First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!

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.
3 You have multiplied exultation;
  you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
  as with joy at the harvest,
  as people exult when dividing plunder.
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.
5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors
  and all the garments rolled in blood
  shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
6 For a child has been born for us,
  a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders,
  and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
  Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Great will be his authority,
  and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
  He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
  from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Psalm: Psalm 96

1 Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
2 **Sing to the Lord, bless the name of the Lord;**
proclaim God's salvation from day to day.
3 Declare God's glory among the nations
and God's wonders among all peoples.
4 **For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised,**
more to be feared than all gods.
5 As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols;
but you, O Lord, have made the heavens.
6 **Majesty and magnificence are in your presence;**
power and splendor are in your sanctuary.
7 Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord honor and power.
8 **Ascribe to the Lord the honor due the holy name;**
bring offerings and enter the courts of the Lord.
9 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
tremble before the Lord, all the earth.
10 **Tell it out among the nations: "The Lord is king!**
The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the peoples with equity."
11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.
12 **Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O Lord,**
for you come to judge the earth.
13 You will judge the world with righteousness
and the peoples with your truth.

Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14

The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.

11 The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, 12 training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, 13 while we wait for the blessed

hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. 14 He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Gospel: Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

8 Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before 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, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

[

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, 19 and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The

shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.]

December 27, 2026

First Reading: Isaiah 61:10—62:3

To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that God's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;
my whole being shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

62:1 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn
and her salvation like a burning torch.
2 The nations shall see your vindication
and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the Lord will give.
3 You shall be a beautiful crown in the hand of the Lord
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Psalm: Psalm 148

1 Hallelujah! Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise God in the heights.
2 **Praise the Lord, all you angels;**
sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.
3 Praise the Lord, sun and moon;
sing praise, all you shining stars.
4 **Praise the Lord, heaven of heavens,**
and you waters above the heavens.

[5] Let them praise the name of the Lord,
who commanded, and they were created,
[6] **who made them stand fast forever and ever,**
giving them a law that shall not pass away.
[7] Praise the Lord from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps;
[8] **fire and hail, snow and fog,**
tempestuous wind, doing God's will;
[9] mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars;
[10] **wild beasts and all cattle,**
creeping things and flying birds;
[11] sovereigns of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the world;
[12] **young men and maidens,**
old and young together.
[13] Let them praise the name of the Lord,
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and heaven.
[14] **The Lord has raised up strength for the people and praise for all faithful servants,**
the children of Israel, a people who are near the Lord.
Hallelujah!

Second Reading: Galatians 4:4-7

Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as beloved children.

[4] When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, [5] in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. [6] And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" [7] So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir through God.

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.

22 When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses,
they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is
written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as
holy to the Lord"), 24 and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated
in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man
was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and
the Holy Spirit rested on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy
Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.
27 Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents
brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law,
28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

29 "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word,
30 for my eyes have seen your salvation,
31 which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
32 a light for revelation to the gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

33 And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said
about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This
child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a
sign that will be opposed 35 so that the inner thoughts of many will be
revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too."

36 There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of
Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years
after her marriage, 37 then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never
left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day.
38 At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the
child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

39 When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they
returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 The child grew and
became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.