

Bible Study
Christmas 1, Year C
December 27, 2015

[RCL] Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7; John 1:1-18; Psalm 147 or 147:13-21

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

In mid-winter, the longest nights of the year, we hear this passage from Isaiah, full of imagery of shining royal splendor and beauty and of the springing forth of plants from the ground. In the midst of cold, dark nights, these images shine even more brightly. We are told that God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up in us, just like the garden causes what is planted in it to spring up. The gardener knows intimately that despite all their work, it is not they who cause the plants to grow and spring forth. We too, are not called to sit idly by and wait for righteousness to spring up in us. We are called to cultivate it, and trust that God will do the rest.

- What might it look like to plant the seeds of righteousness and praise in our hearts?
- How will we know when God has caused righteousness and praise to spring up in us?

Psalm 147 or 147:13-21

This psalm expresses thanksgiving and awe at the glory of God, who not only shapes all things in the natural world, but also cares for us. The psalm closes by extoling God for the special relationship God has with the people of Israel by the revelation of God's judgments. As Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ in his life, death, and resurrection is the revelation of God.

- As you read all of Psalm 147, what other language and imagery reminds you of the revelation of God in Christ, of the incarnation?
- What does the psalmist call us to do in response?
- Why is our response important?

Galatians 3:23-25;4:4-7

Have you ever felt unable to live up to the rules or expectations that govern your life? Constant self-judgment, or the judgment of others, leaves us feeling lacking no matter how hard we work to prove ourselves. Into this quid-pro-quo and pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps world, the light of Christ breaks forth, entering our hearts, and inviting us to cry out "Abba, Father!" For we are no longer slaves to production and success, but we are adopted and beloved children of God.

- What does this amazing gift of adoption by God feel like?
- How is Christ calling us to respond to this gift?

John 1:1-18

Into the midst of our broken and hurting world the light of Christ bursts forth. It is easy to become overwhelmed with the news of terror attacks, of the refugee crisis, of violence and conflict. It can seem like the darkness is all around us, and yet, into that darkness, into that pain and uncertainty, the light of Christ shines, and the darkness did not overcome it. The darkness is still there, the pain and suffering, but with the light of Christ shining in us the darkness no longer

has the power to overcome us. The incarnate one, who became one of us, walks with us through these times of pain, and calls us to follow him, not driven by fear into places of comfort and safety, but to lay down our fear, and to go out into the world to love and serve.

- What difference does the light of Christ make in your life?
- What might following Jesus look like, in light of a current event that has been troubling you?

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