

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time – January 25, 2026 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 8:23-9:3

First the LORD degraded the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the end he has glorified the seaward road, the land west of the Jordan, the District of the Gentiles. Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness: for there is no gloom where but now there was distress.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing, as they rejoice before you as at the harvest, as people make merry when dividing spoils. For the yoke that burdened them, the pole on their shoulder, and the rod of their taskmaster you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.

Psalm: Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14

R. (1a) The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid?

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

One thing I ask of the LORD;
this I seek:

To dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,

That I may gaze on the loveliness of the LORD
and contemplate his temple.

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD
in the land of the living.

Wait for the LORD with courage;
be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose. For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers and sisters, by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you. I mean that each of you is saying, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? For Christ did not send

me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with the wisdom of human eloquence, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-23

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen. From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him. He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

A single candle, placed in a darkened Winter window, will charm us. Picture it in your mind and then compare it to a room with powerful florescent lights. In the latter, every nook and cranny gets equal light, lots of it. There are no shades of grey. The wrinkles and imperfections of a human face want to run and hide because all their mess is made very obvious. Now think of a room lit by several candles. Somehow the better parts of each face are brought out and the flaws are left kindly in the background. Such lights pardon our imperfections and grant us a kind of glow. Jesus is that kind of light. Not a searchlight from which no flawed, fumbling thing can escape. He came as a simple candle, a forgiver of souls, a quiet lover of human faces. There is a passage in the First Reading for Sunday that is quoted word for word in Sunday's Gospel. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone." Here, Jesus is a great light after all. He is relief from the dark that we all walk in. He is divine brilliance.

But the Gospel has him ambling along by the Sea of Galilee like an ordinary person. Strolling. How can this illustrious beam of light be dim, like the rest of us? Some speculations: Maybe he is especially vital, the type that people are attracted to. Maybe he is someone you and I would automatically want to follow. After all, on Sunday we will hear about two sets of brothers who drop everything and go after him: Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, and then James and John—the sons of Zebedee, or "sons of thunder," as Jesus will call them later. None of these men are fools. They would not follow just anyone. Jesus must have been a very appealing person. So, did they see him as a "great light"? Did they somehow acknowledge that grave darkness would be dispelled by him? They probably had heard from the Baptist that Jesus was "The Messiah," the one that the Jews had been awaiting for such a long time. Yet this Sunday we learn that Jesus' light did not infringe on every precious cranny of people's lives, as a searchlight might do. He was like a quiet glow, a candle in the window. His armies did not savage all in their path. His light was not a huge bolt of lightning. It was, impossibly, a quiet flicker that hurricane winds tried and tried to put out, but could not. Seen in this way, Christ's light was indeed great, but in a new way, in an ordinary, diffused way. One that could suffer on our behalf. Pope Benedict XVI put it like this: God's sign is simplicity. God's sign is the baby. God's sign is that he makes himself small for us. This is how he reigns. He does not come with power and outward splendor. He comes as a baby—defenseless and in need of our help. He does not want to overwhelm us with his strength. He takes away our fear of his greatness. He asks for our love: so he makes himself a child.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. In this First Reading Isaiah says that "Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness: for there is no gloom where but now there was distress." He was speaking of the ancient lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, but how about today? From where does the "darkness" in today's world come? Can you think of some recent times when God has dispelled darkness in a significant way?
2. There will always be disagreements. What are some other ways to handle disputes so that good or growth could come out of them?
3. "At once they left their nets and followed him." Do you think Jesus also needed friends? How long did it take Peter and Andrew to respond to his invitation of a personal encounter? What do you think was going on in their heads and hearts? Could they have been excited by the mission of communicating life to others?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Almighty ever-living God, direct our actions according to your good pleasure, that in the name of your beloved Son we may abound in good works. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen