

Christmas Eve 2022 Prophet 'Year A'
Isaiah 9:2-7

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 the nation,
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 Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ His authority shall grow continually,
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 onwards and for evermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Christmas Eve 2022 Gospel 'Year A'
Luke 2:1-14

In those days
a decree went out
from Emperor Augustus
that all the world
should be registered.

²This was the first registration
and was taken while Quirinius
was governor of Syria.

³All went to their own towns
to be registered.

⁴Joseph 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.

⁵He went to be registered
with Mary,
to whom he was engaged
and who was expecting a child.

⁶While they were there,
the time came for her to deliver her child.

⁷And 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 for them
in the inn.

8 In that 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 Saviour,
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 favours!'

Christmas Day 2022 Prophet 'Year A' Isaiah 62:6-12

6 Upon your walls, O Jerusalem,
I have posted sentinels;
all day and all night
they shall never be silent.
You who remind the LORD,
take no rest,

7 and give him no rest
until he establishes Jerusalem
and makes it renowned throughout the earth.

8 The LORD has sworn by his right hand
and by his mighty arm:

I will not again give your grain
to be food for your enemies,
and foreigners shall not drink the wine
for which you have laboured;

9 but those who garner it shall eat it
and praise the LORD,
and those who gather it shall drink it
in my holy courts.

10 Go through, go through the gates,
prepare the way for the people;
build up, build up the highway,
clear it of stones,
lift up an ensign over the peoples.

11 The LORD has proclaimed
to the end of the earth:
Say to daughter Zion,
'See, your salvation comes;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.'

12 They shall be called, 'The Holy People,
The Redeemed of the LORD';
and you shall be called, 'Sought Out,
A City Not Forsaken.'

Christmas Day 2022 Gospel 'Year A'
Luke 2:8-20

⁸ In that 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 Saviour,
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 favours!'

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 But 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,
as it had been told them.

First after Christmas 2022 Prophet 'Year A'
Isaiah 63:7-9

⁷ I will recount
the gracious deeds
of the LORD,
the praiseworthy acts
of the LORD,
because of all
that the LORD has done for us,
and the great favour
to the house of Israel
that he has shown them
according to his mercy,
according to the abundance
of his steadfast love.

⁸ For he said,

'Surely they are my people,
children who will not deal falsely';

and he became their saviour

⁹ in all their distress.

It was no messenger
or angel
but his presence
that saved them;
in his love
and in his pity
he redeemed them;

he lifted them up
and carried them
all the days of old.

First after Christmas 2022 Gospel 'Year A'
Matthew 2:13-23

¹³ Now after they had left,
an angel of the Lord
appeared to Joseph in a dream
and said,
'Get up, take the child and his mother,
and flee to Egypt,
and remain there until I tell you;
for Herod is about to search for the child,
to destroy him.'

¹⁴ Then Joseph got up,
took the child and his mother by night,
and went to Egypt,
¹⁵ and remained there
until the death of Herod.

This was to fulfil
what had been spoken by the Lord
through the prophet,

'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

¹⁶ When Herod saw
that he had been tricked by the wise men,
he was infuriated,
and he sent and killed all the children
in and around Bethlehem
who were two years old or under,
according to the time
that he had learned
from the wise men.

¹⁷ Then was fulfilled
what had been spoken
through the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ 'A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more.'

¹⁹ When Herod died,
an angel of the Lord
suddenly appeared in a dream
to Joseph in Egypt
and said,

²⁰ 'Get up,
take the child and his mother,
and go to the land of Israel,
for those who were seeking the child's life
are dead.'

²¹ Then Joseph got up,
took the child and his mother,
and went to the land of Israel.

²² But when he heard
that Archelaus was ruling over Judea
in place of his father Herod,
he was afraid to go there.

And after being warned in a dream,
he went away to the district of Galilee.

²³ There he made his home
in a town called Nazareth,
so that what had been spoken
through the prophets
might be fulfilled,

'He will be called a Nazorean.'

Notes on Reading This Christmas

We have begun Year A, the year of Matthew,
in the 3-year Revised Common Lectionary.

We're given bits of Isaiah,
shaping anticipation of Jesus –
not necessarily predicting that one event

Christmas Eve and Day,
we get Luke 2:1-20
parts of the 'pageant' –

We skip the Magi,
Matthew's gift to the pageant,
to return on Epiphany, as usual

Instead, this year,
we get 'Flight to Egypt'
and 'Slaughter of the Holy Innocents'

I'll look forward to our conversations
in this week, and in this season...

Spoiler alert –
I also doubt the historicity
of the 'flight to Egypt'
but not the general shape
of refugee flight
and tyrannical genocide

Reading the Prophet this Week

The church hears Isaiah and 'trito-Isaiah' this week
can you hear it beyond the 'predicting Jesus' trope?

Isaiah 9 comes from a century pre-exile
Did the young original prophet hope for Hezekiah's reform,
anticipate the destruction of Assyria?
The editors who kept and transmitted it didn't

People who knew waves of siege, plunder and pillaging,
might contrast the vision of their own relief, sharing
and hope for 'peace, order, and good government'

If that hope was simply a one-shot prediction,
delayed 700 years in delivery –
did Jesus fit the prediction?

Isaiah 62 and 63 come from 'Third Isaiah'
(or at least from c40-66 'Second Isaiah')
post-exile, restoration rebuilding perspective

By the time of our edition of the book,
(whatever the source voices)
Persians are ruling, permitting a Second Temple

The editors, translators, transmitters, readers since
know that most Jews stay scattered in 'diaspora'
much writing happens in Babylon/Iraq, then Alexandria/Egypt

The vision of Jerusalem as a beacon drawing all toward it?
That's hardly a political program of domination!
Desecration of the Second Temple in Hasmonean 165BCE,
its metastasizing growth under Roman proxy Herod
were not triumphal MAGA moments!

How can these songs shape our hope?

Reading the Gospel(s) this Week

On the Eve and the Day, we hear Luke
the lectionary offers 4 sets of alternates, even John 1
but you can't do Eve/Day without Luke, eh?

Most of our 'Christmas Pageant' comes from Luke
only the Magi come from Matthew – postponed to Epiphany
or at least 'flight' and 'massacre' to post Eve/Day

Octavian, now Caesar Emperor Augustus,
winner of civil war with Antony,
rules imperially, militarily from Rome

Imagine angels as God's army – 'host' is 'troop' like soldiers
This is not a call to armed insurrection
but 'go and see', 'go and tell' – what?

What we're left with from Matthew, without Magi
is 'flight to Egypt' and 'massacre of innocents'
framed like Exodus and Moses' infancy

Whatever factual fragments fit, or don't
for these individuals or others, then as now,
migration and genocide are real, not 'symbolic'

Matthew's 'fulfillment' this time is Jeremiah
Rachel (legendary mother of Joseph and Benjamin,
2 of 12 sons of Abraham, 3 of 12 tribes in Israel)
buried in Ramah, dying in birthing Benjamin, weeps

Framing Jesus as Galilean from Nazareth,
Matthew includes a couple of traditions:
avoiding Archelaus for another of Herod's sons
associating with 'nazarite' vows, like Samson, Samuel

How do these infancy narratives frame your gospels?