

**First Lesson**      *Isaiah 40:1-11*

A voice cries in the wilderness

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.  
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.

A voice cries out:  
'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our  
God.  
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.  
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

A voice says, 'Cry out!'  
And I said, 'What shall I cry?'  
All people are grass,  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.  
The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand for ever.  
Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,  
lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
'Here is your God!'  
See, the Lord God comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.  
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.

**Second Lesson**      *Isaiah 52.7-10*

How beautiful on the mountains

How beautiful upon the mountains  
are the feet of the messenger who announces  
peace,  
who brings good news,  
who announces salvation,  
who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'  
Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,  
together they sing for joy;  
for in plain sight they see  
the return of the LORD to Zion.  
Break forth together into singing,  
you ruins of Jerusalem;  
for the LORD has comforted his people,  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.  
The LORD has bared his holy arm  
before the eyes of all the nations;  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
the salvation of our God.

**Third Lesson**      *Malachi 3:1-5*

Behold, I send my messenger

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare  
the way before me, and the Lord whom you  
seek will suddenly come to his temple. The  
messenger of the covenant in whom you  
delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of  
hosts. But who can endure the day of his  
coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers'  
soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of  
silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi  
and refine them like gold and silver, until they  
present offerings to the Lord in righteousness.  
Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will  
be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old  
and as in former years.

Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will  
be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers,  
against the adulterers, against those who swear  
falsely, against those who oppress the hired  
workers in their wages, the widow, and the  
orphan, against those who thrust aside the  
alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of  
hosts.



**Fourth Lesson**     *Isaiah 61:1-3,11*

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me

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 broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
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.  
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.

**Gospel Reading**     *Luke 1:67-79*

Benedictus (The Song of Zechariah)

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the  
Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:  
'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for he has looked favourably on his people  
and redeemed them.  
He has raised up a mighty saviour for us  
in the house of his servant David,  
as he spoke through the mouth of his holy  
prophets from of old,  
that we would be saved from our enemies  
and from the hand of all who hate us.  
Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our  
ancestors,  
and has remembered his holy covenant,  
the oath that he swore to our ancestor  
Abraham,  
to grant us that we, being rescued from  
the hands of our enemies,  
might serve him without fear, in holiness and  
righteousness  
before him all our days.  
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the  
Most High;  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his  
ways,  
to give knowledge of salvation to his people  
by the forgiveness of their sins.  
By the tender mercy of our God,  
the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
to give light to those who sit in darkness  
and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

