

December 28 – First Sunday after Christmas

Word of God

Isaiah 63:7–14: I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that He has granted them according to His compassion, according to the abundance of His steadfast love. For He said, “Surely they are My people, children who will not deal falsely.” And He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore He turned to be their enemy, and Himself fought against them. Then He remembered the days of old, of Moses and His people. Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put in the midst of them His Holy Spirit, who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name, who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble. Like livestock that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. So You led Your people, to make for Yourself a glorious name.

Psalm 111: Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them. Full of splendor and majesty is His work, and His righteousness endures forever. He has caused His wondrous works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and merciful. He provides food for those who fear Him; He remembers His covenant forever. He has shown His people the power of His works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations. The works of His hands are faithful and just; all His precepts are trustworthy; they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. He sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever. Holy and awesome is His name! The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

Galatians 4:4–7: But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Matthew 2:13–23: Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, 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.” And he rose and took the child and His mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.” Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.” But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Rise, take the child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” And he rose and took the child and His mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that He would be called a Nazarene.

Reflection in the Field

On Christmas Day the Word became flesh; in these days after, we learn how that living Word walks with us through danger and deliverance. Isaiah recounts the steadfast love and mercy of the Lord, who carried His people as a shepherd bears a lamb. Psalm 111 calls us to grateful remembrance, naming God’s works as faithful and just. In the fullness of time, Christ came

to make us sons and daughters—no longer slaves but heirs. And in Matthew’s Gospel, the Child is guarded through the night, led in and out of Egypt, fulfilling the promise: “Out of Egypt I called my Son.”

Those who serve beside horses know this rhythm of guidance and trust. We do not sprint the dark pasture; we move quietly, feel for the ground beneath, and follow with calm steadiness. The horse learns safety in the nearness of one who is gentle and sure; we, too, learn to rest in the nearness of Christ, whose providence does not fail, even when the path bends toward exile. In every change of direction—Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth—the Father’s hand is sure. His love remembers, His arm redeems, and His presence leads us safely on.

Luther Reflection

“When the time was fulfilled, God sent His Son—born of a woman—not that we by our works should climb up to Him, but that He Himself should come down to us, take our flesh, and make us heirs by grace.”

— Martin Luther, Lectures on Galatians (1535), Luther’s Works 26 (on Galatians 4:4–7)

Reflection Prompts

Where do you need to remember the Lord’s steadfast love today?
What work of God can you name and praise with gratitude?

How does your identity as an adopted child and heir in Christ shape your courage this week?

Where do you sense God guiding you through a change of direction, and how might you follow with quiet trust?

Closing Prayer

Faithful Father, You remember mercy and keep Your promises. As You guarded the Holy Child and led Him safely on the way, guard us in Your love and guide our steps. Teach us the quiet trust that steadies a restless heart—the calm of Your presence that leads us through night and into light. Make us to live as Your sons and daughters, redeemed and free, praising Your works with thankful hearts.

Amen.

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.
(Numbers 6:24–26)*