

### Sentence of Scripture

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. Luke 1.78-79

### Prayer of the day

God of our salvation,  
you straighten the winding ways of our hearts  
and smooth the paths made rough by sin:  
keep our hearts watchful in holiness,  
and bring to perfection the good you have begun in us.  
We ask this through him whose coming is certain,  
whose Day draws near,  
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### Malachi 3:1–14

**3** 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. **2** 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; **3** 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. **4** Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. **5** Then I will draw near to you for judgment; 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. **6** For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished. **7** Ever since the days of your ancestors you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, “How shall we return?” **8** Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, “How are we robbing you?” In your tithes and offerings! **9** You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! **10** Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. **11** I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the LORD of hosts. **12** Then all nations will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts. **13** You have spoken harsh words against me, says the LORD. Yet you say, “How have we spoken against you?” **14** You have said, “It is vain to serve God. What do we profit by keeping his command or by going about as mourners before the LORD of hosts?

*Hear the word of the Lord, thanks be to God.*

### The Song of Zechariah (APBA p10)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel:

    who has come to his people and set them free.

**The Lord has raised up for us a mighty Saviour:  
    born of the house of his servant David.**

Through the holy prophets, God promised of old:  
    to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us,

**To show mercy to our forebears:  
    and to remember his holy covenant.**

This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

**Free to worship him without fear:**  
**holy and righteous before him, all the days of our life.**

And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High:  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,

**To give his people knowledge of salvation:**  
**by the forgiveness of their sins.**

In the tender compassion of our God:  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

**To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death:**  
**and to guide our feet into the way of peace.**

Glory to God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; as in the beginning, so now, and for ever.  
**Amen.**

### **Philippians 1:1-11**

**1** Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: **2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **3** I thank my God every time I remember you, **4** constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, **5** because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. **6** I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. **7** It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. **8** For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. **9** And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight **10** to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, **11** having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

(NRSV)

*Hear the word of the Lord, thanks be to God.*

### **Luke 3:1-6**

*The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ    Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ.*

**1** In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, **2** during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. **3** He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, **4** as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.

**5** Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;

**6** and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

(NRSV)

*This is the Gospel of our Lord, praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

### **Next Week's Readings**

Zephaniah 3.14–20 Isaiah 12.2–6 (page 391) Philippians 4.4–7 Luke 3.7–18