

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church  
 Second Sunday after Christmas  
 January 4, 2026  
 rmcneely+

Grant that the same light enkindled in our hearts  
 May shine forth in our lives.

Due to the mechanics of the Christian calendar  
 We seldom celebrate the Second Sunday after Christmas  
 And seldom get to consider the Collect, Epistle and Gospel  
 Of the Day.

So, let us take full advantage of the day and delve into the message  
 of the day.

But first, let's note some things about the Liturgics of this day:

Unlike most of the Collects, today's collect does not come to us  
 from Thomas Cranmer.

It's origin is French; from the Gregorian Sacramentary  
 Written in the time of Charlemagne.

Unlike most of them, today's Epistle is not from a letter written by  
 St Paul.

In fact, is not a letter at all,  
 And it is not even from the New Testament.  
 It is from Isaiah of the Old Testament.

On this uncommon Sunday with its unusual Collect and Epistle  
 Where is the Church has our attention but where is it  
 directing us?

We need to focus on a back-story.  
 Return to the time of Jesus ministry  
 To a synagogue in Nazareth.  
 To an account of St Luke:

Luke relates something that Jesus did often.

On the Sabbath, He attends the synagogue as usual.

It is his turn to read the scripture.

The scroll is handed to Him

and He reads the appointed lesson.

It is from Isaiah.

In fact, the very same verses

that are the heart of today's Epistle: (Isaiah 61:1).

Jesus reads the words of Isaiah

They lay out the task that Isaiah relates was given him by God:

Preach to the meek

Bind up the broken hearted

Proclaim liberty to the captive

Open the prison to those who are bound

Proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord

A day of vengeance of our God

To comfort those who mourn

To give beauty for ashes

Oil of joy for those who mourn

To give a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness

That they might be called the trees of righteousness.

That God may be glorified.

After reading the words of Isaiah

Jesus closes the scroll

All eyes are upon Him

And tells them:

"This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears".

Was it just a coincidence that Jesus was chosen on that day

To read that particular scripture?

You decide.

We can imagine a stunned silence.

Jesus has declared that the prophecy of Isaiah  
 Will be fulfilled by the man standing before them.  
 Jesus is the One who will complete the prophecy of Isaiah  
 And they and we shall be called “trees of righteousness.”

It must have been hard for them to take.  
 They knew Him as Joe and Mary’s boy  
 The boy brought home from Egypt.  
 The apprentice carpenter.  
 Yet, He spoke with authority and there was something about Him.  
 He would soon leave Nazareth and begin His 3-year ministry  
 His walk to Calvary.

In those 3 years He indeed fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy  
 Accomplished all the tasks that Isaiah had outlined.

So on this Second Sunday after Christmas  
 The Gospel completes the story of His Nativity  
 With His return to Nazareth  
 Made safe by His father Joseph  
 and returned to begin His Mission.

On this Second Sunday after Christmas  
 We can imagine the Epiphany as we conclude the Nativity.  
 The Epiphany that we celebrate in 48 hours  
 when we begin the walk to Calvary and to our salvation.

And so, on this Second Sunday after Christmas  
 We can see the door closing on the Nativity  
 And opening to the Epiphany.

The world has observed and celebrated the dawn of a new year.  
 With champaign  
 Fireworks  
 Crowds  
 The ball drop in Times Square  
 Resolutions that may actually be kept for a few months.

A time of release from their past and a clean slate to begin 2026.  
 We can appreciate their relief and anticipation,  
 Because we have already been there.  
 From the end of November and the first Sunday in Advent.

We have repented of our past  
 Been absolved of our misdoings.  
 When we receive a new life  
 At the acceptance of the Body and Blood of Christ  
 in the Eucharist, every week.  
 Our joy in the new beginning culminated on Christmas  
 With the commemoration of the birth of Christ Jesus.

Let us now turn to today's Collect  
 A prayer that has been offered for over 1200 years.

We pray that the light enkindled in our hearts may shine forth in our lives.

A statement of faith and good works together in our lives.  
 That the fire of our faith  
 may kindle what we do with our lives.

Isaiah concluded his prophecy in an interesting fashion:  
 He said "that they may be called trees of righteousness  
 The planting of the Lord  
 That He might be glorified".

Isaiah was pointing to us who are the beneficiaries of Jesus' work  
 And told us we have been planted by the Lord.  
 By virtue of our faith and His Grace,  
 In the analogy God has planted us  
 Has placed us in this time and place  
 To become as trees  
 Trees of righteousness.

I am sure Isaiah never knew of the giant redwood trees of California,

Even though some of them are his contemporaries.  
He most likely thought of the cedars of Lebanon or the Oaks of Canaan.

But for us the analogy must be to the stately and ancient redwoods

That one time ringed the Bay  
But most are now isolated remnants  
in National and State parks  
in hopes of their preservation.

They are tall, massive, seemingly immune from fire and disease  
And the ill works of man.

They stand as silent sentinels.

Living together in groves through out the Bay Area.  
Symbols of righteousness.

Moral living according to God's laws.  
15 of them still thrive within sight of our home  
in Walnut Creek.  
Reminders.

They and we, planted by the Lord  
That He might be glorified.

Glorification is one of those Church words that we throw around.  
Have you ever considered what it means? Glorified?

So that we may comprehend something well beyond our abilities  
It is an analogy.

Light.  
Something we see brightly in the daytime and with subtlety  
at night.

God illuminates us with His grace, His love, His inspiration.  
As that light reaches us, we are enlivened.  
We react to it.

When we follow His laws,

Live the life He intends us to live,  
Do the good works He has ‘prepared for us to walk in’;  
His light is reflected in what we do.

It is there for all to see, hear and touch.

We thereby reflect the light of God in our lives.

That is how we “glorify God”.

So Isaiah and later Jesus is showing us that we,

Planted by God as if one of His strong trees  
Having the goodness of God rained upon us  
Thrive in the glory of God  
As examples of righteousness.

Brave, strong and bold by the Grace of God.

In a forest of doubt and dissention and sarcasm

We tower above it.

As sentinels of doing the right thing.

There for all to see

Admire

and follow.

And so as we reach the conclusion of the celebration of the  
Nativity and put away the symbols of His birth;

The trees, the lights, the wreaths

Let us keep constant the new light of God’s incarnate Word;  
Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

And so we pray in the words of the Collect for the day

“Almighty God

who hast poured upon us the new light of thine incarnate  
Word;

Grant that the same light enkindled in our hearts

May shine forth in our lives.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

