

# THE WORD OF THE LORD

Sunday, January 23, 2022 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

## **Psalm 19**

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.

They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.

Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

## **Luke 4:14-21**

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

## **Nehemiah 8:1-10**

When everyone had settled, they re-gathered in Jerusalem. Everyone met in the square that is in front of the water gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the book of the law, the word the Eternal sent through Moses to Israel. Ezra the priest did as they asked, bringing God's law to Israel. The community included both men and women—anyone who was able to understand was welcomed. This gathering took place on the first day of the seventh

month. Facing the people in the square, next to the water gate, he began to read excerpts. The document was massive, and just reading parts took him six or seven hours, from daybreak until noon. Everyone who was there heard him: men, women—anyone with the ability to understand. As he read, they were focused and listened carefully to the book of the law.

And as he read, Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform made for this very occasion. Standing above the people so they could see and hear him, Ezra opened the book of the law. As he opened the book, everyone stood. Then Ezra called out and blessed the Eternal, worshiping God's greatness. With their hands raised to the heavens, the people called out loudly in response, crying, "Amen! So may it be!" Then they fell to their knees and bowed. With their faces to the ground, they worshiped the Eternal. Ezra read the law, the people listened, and the Levites explained it to them.

Now, as God's law was read, the people began to weep. But Nehemiah (the Persians' appointed governor), Ezra the priest and scribe, and all the ministering Levites said to the people, "This day is sacred to the Eternal One, your God. It is not a day for mourning and weeping. Go back to your homes, and prepare a feast. Bring out the best food and drink you have, and welcome all to your table, especially those who have nothing. This day is special. It is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve over your past mistakes. Let the Eternal's own joy be your protection!"