

John 1:(1-9), 10-18

The pre-existing Word, who was with God and is God, became flesh and dwelt among us, revealing God's grace and glory to us and giving us the power to become God's children.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Christmas 2C/COCU 7C

At the heart of this week's readings is a single, significant and challenging theme – that God has chosen people to be God's children, to whom God reveals God's self, and through whom God works to bring salvation to the entire universe. In Jeremiah God promises restoration for God's exiled people, and offers a promise of grace and love even to those who would have been considered unclean or unacceptable to God in the past. In the Psalm, God's people are called to celebrate what God has done for God's chosen ones. In Ephesians the wonderful blessing of salvation is proclaimed, with a specific reference to how we have been made God's children who have been shown God's plan and who have received the Spirit to empower us to participate in the plan. Finally, in John's prologue, the Word becomes flesh, reveals God to all people, but enables those who believe to become God's children. As we explore what this means, we will find that this week we are called to find comfort in God's choosing of us, but we are also called to recognise that God has also chosen those whom we would deem unacceptable, while calling all of us to participate together in bringing God's grace – God's choosing – to the entire cosmos. What can be more comforting and inspiring than to know that we live in a cosmos in which every fragment of creation proclaims that we – and the entire universe – are beloved?

At this time in history the world seems completely fragmented. Religious groups claim their own chosenness, while condemning those who believe and worship differently. Political parties are more divisive and oppositional than ever, and the competition in the global economy is creating a few massive winners, but lots of losers. Yet even in the midst of our fear and divisions there is another reality that is at work in the universe – the gracious choosing of God that declares that all are one and all are beloved. When we begin to understand this truth, we cannot help but treat people of different religions, nationalities, cultures, languages, sexual orientations, and genders as God's beloved children.
(John van de Laar, Sacredise)

Psalm 147:12-20

¹²Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!
Praise your God, O Zion!
¹³For God strengthens the bars of your gates;
God blesses your children within you.
¹⁴ God grants peace within your borders;
God fills you with the finest of wheat.
¹⁵ God sends out his command to the earth;
God's word runs swiftly.
¹⁶ God gives snow like wool
and scatters frost like ashes.
¹⁷ God hurls down hail like crumbs
- who can stand before his cold?
¹⁸ God sends out his word, and melts them;
God makes the wind blow, and the waters flow.
¹⁹ God declares his word to Jacob,
his statutes and ordinances to Israel.
²⁰ God has not dealt thus with any other nation;
they do not know his ordinances.
Praise the Lord!

Jeremiah 31:7-14

⁷For thus says the Lord: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, "Save, O Lord, your people, the remnant of Israel." ⁸See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. ⁹With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. ¹⁰Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock." ¹¹For the Lord has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. ¹²They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and

they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. ¹³Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. ¹⁴I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the Lord.

Ephesians 1:1-14

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.