

Lessons & Carols – Readings 1-7

1) Lesson from the Book of Genesis in which we hear of sin and its outcomes.

When they heard the sound of Yahweh walking in the garden in the cool of the evening, the man and the woman hid from Yahweh's presence among the trees of the garden. Yahweh called to the man,

"Where are you?"

"I heard you walking in the garden, I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid."

"Who told you of your nakedness? Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I forbade you to eat?"

"It was the woman you put beside me; she gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

"What is this that you have done?"

"The snake tempted me, so I ate."

"Snake, because you have done this, you are accursed: lower than the cattle, lower than the wild beasts, you will crawl on your belly and eat dust every day of your life. I will make you enemies of one another, you and the woman, your offspring and hers; her offspring will wound you on the head, and you will wound hers in the heel."

Yahweh drove the man and the woman from the garden of Eden, and sent them to till the soil from which they had been taken. Once they were banished, winged sphinxes with fiery, ever-turning swords were placed at the entrance to the garden to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

The Word of God.

2) Lesson from the Book of Genesis in which we hear of the destiny of the brothers, Isaac and Ishmael.

Sarah noticed Ishmael, the child Hagar had borne for Abraham, playing with her son, Isaac. She demanded of Abraham, "Send Hagar and her child away! I will not have this child of my attendant share in Isaac's inheritance."

Abraham was greatly distressed by this because of his son Ishmael. But God said to Abraham, "Don't be distressed about the child or about Hagar. Heed Sarah's demands, for it is through Isaac that descendants will bear your name. As for the child of Hagar the Egyptian, I will make a great nation of him as well, since he is also your offspring."

The Word of God.

3) Lesson from the Prophet Isaiah in which we hear of the child who is our hope.

"The people walking in darkness are seeing a brilliant light –

upon those who dwell in a land of deep shadows light is shining!

God, you have made the nation greater – you have brought them abundant joy! They celebrate in your presence as with the harvest celebrations.

For the yoke that burdened them, the weight on their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressors, you have shattered it.

For a child is born to us, an heir is given us, upon whose shoulders dominion will rest.

This One shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Strength of God, Eternal Protector,
Champion of Peace.

This dominion, and this peace, will grow without end.

The zeal of Yahweh Omnipotent will accomplish it!" The Word of God.

4) Lesson from the Gospel of Luke in which we hear the greeting to Mary and of her courage.

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman named Mary; she was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. Upon arriving, the angel said to Mary,

“Rejoice, highly favored one! God is with you! Blessed are you among women.”

Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what the angel’s greeting meant.

“Don’t be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You will conceive and bear a son, and give him the name Jesus. His dignity will be great, and he will be called the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgment seat of David, his ancestor, to rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will never end.”

“How can this be since I have never been with a man?”

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you – hence the offspring to be born will be called the Holy One of God.

“I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say.”

With that, the angel left her.

The Word of God.

5) Lesson from the Gospel of Luke in which we hear of the birth of this child, Emmanuel.

In those days, Caesar Augustus published a decree ordering a census of the whole Roman world. All the people were instructed to go back to the towns of their birth to register. And so Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the city of David” – Bethlehem in Judea, because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David; he went to register with Mary, his espoused wife, who was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her delivery. She gave birth to her firstborn, a son; she put him in a simple cloth wrapped like a receiving blanket, and laid him in a feeding trough for cattle, because there was no room for them at the inn.

The Word of God.

6) Lesson from the Gospel of Luke in which we hear of the first visitors to the child.

There were shepherds in the area living in the fields and keeping night watch by turns over their flock. The angel of God appeared to them, and the glory of God shone around them; they were very much afraid.

The angel said to them, “You have nothing to fear! I come to proclaim good news to you – news of a great joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in David’s city, a savior – the Messiah – has been born to you. Let this be a sign to you: you will find an infant wrapped in a simple cloth, lying in a manger.”

Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in high heaven! And on earth, peace to those on whom God’s favor rests.”

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem and see this event that God has made known to us.” They hurried and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

The Word of God.

7) Lesson from the Gospel of John in which we hear of the One who is the Beginning and the End, the Light that overcomes darkness.

In the beginning was the Word;
the Word was in God's presence, and the Word was God.
The Word was present to God from the beginning.
Through the Word all things came into being,
and apart from the Word nothing came to be.
Whatever came to be in the Word, found life, life for the light of all.
This light shines on in darkness,
a darkness that does not overcome it.

The Word was in the world,
and through the Word the world was made,
yet the world did not know the Word.

To his own the Word came, yet his own did not accept him.
Any who did accept him were empowered to become children of God.
The Word became flesh and dwelled among us;
and we have seen this glory, the glory of an only Begotten One coming from the
Beloved Parent filled with enduring love.

Of this Begotten One's fullness we have all had a share –
love following upon love.

The Word of God