**FIRST READING Zephaniah 3:14-20**

A reading from the book of the prophet Zephaniah

Sing and shout for joy, people of Israel! Rejoice with all your heart, Jerusalem! The Lord has stopped your punishment; he has removed all your enemies. The Lord, the king of Israel, is with you; there is no reason now to be afraid. The time is coming when they will say to Jerusalem, “Do not be afraid, city of Zion! Do not let your hands hang limp! The Lord your God is with you; his power gives you victory. The Lord will take delight in you, and in his love, he will give you new life. He will sing and be joyful over you, as joyful as people at a festival.” The Lord says, “I have ended the threat of doom and taken away your disgrace. The time is coming! I will punish your oppressors; I will rescue all the lame and bring the exiles home. I will turn their shame to honour, and all the world will praise them. The time is coming! I will bring your scattered people home; I will make you famous throughout the world and make you prosperous once again.” The Lord has spoken.

**Canticle: Isaiah 12:2-6**

God is my saviour; I will trust him and not be afraid. The Lord gives me power and strength; he is my saviour. As fresh water brings joy to the thirsty, so God's people rejoice when he saves them.” A day is coming when people will sing, “Give thanks to the Lord! Call for him to help you! Tell all the nations what he has done! Tell them how great he is! Sing to the Lord because of the great things he has done. Let the whole world hear the news. Let everyone who lives in Zion shout and sing! Israel's holy God is great, and he lives among his people.”

**SECOND READING Philippians 4:4-7**

A reading from the book of Philippians

May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord. I say it again: rejoice!

Show a gentle attitude toward everyone. The Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

**GOSPEL Luke 3:7-18**

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

**Glory to you O Lord.**

Crowds of people came out to John to be baptized by him. “You snakes!” he said to them. “Who told you that you could escape from the punishment God is about to send? Do those things that will show that you have turned from your sins. And don't start saying among yourselves that Abraham is your ancestor. I tell you that God can take these rocks and make descendants for Abraham! The axe is ready to cut down the trees at the roots; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire.” The people asked him, “What are we to do, then?” He answered, “Whoever has two shirts must give one to the man who has none, and whoever has food must share it.” Some tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what are we to do?” “Don't collect more than is legal,” he told them. Some soldiers also asked him, “What about us? What are we to do?” He said to them, “Don't take money from anyone by force or accuse anyone falsely. Be content with your pay.” People's hopes began to rise, and they began to wonder whether John perhaps might be the Messiah. So John said to all of them, “I baptize you with water, but someone is coming who is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to untie his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He has his winnowing shovel with him, to thresh out all the grain and gather the wheat into his barn; but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out.” In many different ways John preached the Good News to the people and urged them to change their ways.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**