

DECEMBER 31, 2023
FIRST SUNDAY AFTER
CHRISTMAS



Praise God for salvation and all of creation.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Luke 2:22-40	Jesus presented in the temple
Monday	Isaiah 61:10—63:3	Rejoice in the Lord
Tuesday	Galatians 4:4-7	Adoption as God's children
Wednesday	Psalms 24	Entrance into the temple
Thursday	Romans 8:18-25	Future glory
Friday	Job 12:7-10	If you want to learn
Saturday	Psalms 148	All creation praises God
Sunday	Mark 1:4-11	The baptism of Jesus

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

Let them [all parts of creation] praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven.

Psalms 148:13 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Creator God, help us to see how deep and wide your saving work for all creation is, a love that is seen most clearly through Jesus, the one born in Bethlehem. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, with sheep and cattle and all creation, we thank you for feeding us each day with food from the earth and with your saving grace through Jesus. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May God give you and all creation peace through Jesus.



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HYMN OF THE WEEK

Away in a Manger



WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS



Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What does creation care mean to you?
- How do you show praise to God for all that God has created?

DEVOTIONS



Read: Psalm 148.

Psalm 148 states that creation belongs to God, and God has promised creation a future forever (v.6). Jesus being born in Bethlehem places creation front and center as part of the saving work of God. From angels to sun and moon to shining stars, from earth to sea monsters, from fire and hail to stormy winds, the list goes on and on to include all of creation as the recipients of God's saving work. God's saving grace is not just for humans. The Apostle Paul names this when he writes in Romans 8:21, "*creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay.*" What God has done in bringing us a Savior far exceeds all that we can imagine, even having all of creation join us in praise to God. When we look through the verses in many Christmas hymns, we are reminded that creation is often part of the Christmas message.

Discuss: How does Psalm 148 help you think anew about God's saving work in Christ?

Pray: **O God, our creator and redeemer, we thank you for your love that extends to all of creation through Jesus Christ, born to us in Bethlehem. Amen.**

SERVICE



Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings and theme for this week, in what way can you show care for God's creation?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS



When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple, Simeon and Anna, prophets who had waited all their lives for Jesus, recognized him as the Promised One. Luke 2:29-32 is known as the *Nunc Dimittis*, Latin for "now let depart." This is Simeon's song of praise making it clear that God acted in a way that gives peace for all people. The words of Simeon's song are often used for evening worship. Write a list of words that give you peace.

Pray: **Loving God, we thank you for Simeon, Anna, and all those throughout history who have lifted-up Jesus as the hope and peace for all the world. Amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org