

3rd Sunday of the Year A

First Reading Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3

In days past the Lord humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in days to come he will confer glory on the Way of the Sea on the far side of Jordan, province of the nations.

The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. You have made their gladness greater, you have made their joy increase; they rejoice in your presence as men rejoice at harvest time, as men are happy when they are dividing the spoils. For the yoke that was weighing on him, the bar across his shoulders, the rod of his oppressor, these you break as on the day of Midian.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 1:10-13.17

I do appeal to you, brothers and sisters, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make up the differences between you, and instead of disagreeing among yourselves, to be united again in your belief and practice. From what Chloe's people have been telling me, my dear brothers and sisters, it is clear that there are serious differences among you. What I mean are all these slogans that you have, like: "I am for Paul", "I am for Apollos", "I am for Cephas", "I am for Christ".

Has Christ been parcelled out? Was it Paul that was crucified for you? Were you baptised in the name of Paul? For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the Good News, and not to preach that in the terms of philosophy in which the crucifixion of Christ cannot be expressed.

Gospel Matthew 4:12-17

Hearing that John had been arrested Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled: Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali! Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan, Galilee of the nations! The people that lived in darkness has seen a great light; on those who dwell in the land and shadow of death a light has dawned. From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand."

Meditation

This Sunday's gospel opens with the preaching of Jesus. The time of prophecy had ended with the arrest of the Baptist. He had to decrease so the other could increase. The gates of the prison have been closed upon this great voice. Up to this time Jesus has been silent. Henceforth he must proclaim that the kingdom is here. This proclamation begins surprisingly at this frontier crossroads of Galilee. Common opinion held that nothing good could come from Galilee. It was to this people, then under subjection, that Isaiah had announced the messianic light of the Immanuel. It is again to them that Jesus addresses himself. He is the one who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying to Zion, "Your God is King." (Is 52:7)

This dawn of the kingdom calls for a change of heart. From this moment on, the Messiah had some faithful followers. The memory of their fidelity to Jesus remains. Here the Church is born.