SECOND READING  Eph 2:4-10

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

God loved us with so much love that he was
generous with his mercy: when we were
dead through our sins, he brought us to life
with Christ – it is through grace that you have
been saved – and raised us up with him and
gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ
Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come,
through his goodness towards us in Christ
Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace.

Because it is by grace that you have been
saved, through faith; not by anything of your
own, but by a gift from God; not by anything
that you have done, so that nobody can claim
the credit. We are God's work of art, created
in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from
the beginning he had meant us to live it.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL

Jn 3:14-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

“The Son of Man must be lifted up
as Moses lifted up the serpent in the
desert, so that everyone who believes may
have eternal life in him.

Yes, God loved the world so much
that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may
not be lost
but may live an eternal life.

For God sent his Son into the world
to the salvation of all the world.

we may always ponder
with the splendour of your grace,
through Christ our Lord.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We place before you with joy these offerings,
which bring eternal remedy; O Lord,
praying that we may both faithfully revere
and present them to you, as is fitting,
for the salvation of all the world.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Jerusalem is built as a city bonded as one
together.

It is there that the tribes go up, the tribes of
the Lord,
to praise the name of the Lord.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, who enlighten everyone who comes
into this world,
illuminate our hearts, we pray,
with the splendour of your grace,
that we may always ponder
what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty
and love you in all sincerity.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.
In the Fourth Gospel (John), Jesus encounters individuals who represent a specific type of person. Nicodemus is a Jewish scholar who is, literally, in the dark about Jesus. He is an honest individual, one with well-formed beliefs, whose attitude to Jesus is positive, but limited by his own understanding of God.

He is impressed by the signs that Jesus has worked, but these do not, and cannot, bring him to a true appreciation of who Jesus really is. He seems to want to fit Jesus into his present system of belief, but Jesus challenges him to expand his vision beyond a narrowly Jewish way of thinking to one which is universal.

Jesus appeals to their common Jewish heritage by invoking the memory of Moses’ fashioning the bronze serpent and curing the Israelites who had been bitten by snakes as punishment for their complaining during the Exodus journey through the wilderness. By a play on the verb ‘to lift up’, he presents his own being exalted on the cross as a similar healing for all those who will look at him and believe. Jesus speaks of this concern of God as being due to God’s love for the world, that is, for all human beings. It is on the response which the person makes to the revealing of God’s self in Jesus that judgment depends: it is not an act of God, but the result of the decision which each one makes for themselves which determines whether a person is condemned or not. Judgment is in the here and now, based on whether we accept or reject Jesus and his message.

In the Gospel according to John, the crucifixion is ‘the exaltation’ (‘lifting up’) of Jesus as King and Priest.

Light and darkness/night are symbols of belief and unbelief in the Fourth Gospel.

Judgment in John is the decision the person makes to accept or reject Jesus and his message: it is something which the individual does, not an external, divine action.

Nicodemus sincerely believed in the teachings he had received: Jesus did not tell him that he was wrong, but encouraged him to think more deeply about how God viewed the world, not just Nicodemus’ part of it. Perhaps we might put ourselves in Nicodemus’ shoes and broaden our understanding of Jesus and his message as well.

The Son of Man must be lifted up... so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

(John 3:14-15)