

Sunday 17th December 2023

3rd Sunday of Advent

Reading 1: 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24

Gospel: John 1: 6-8, 19-28

Advent Prayer

Lighting of the third candle:

God our Father,
you gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth
in their old age a son called John.
He grew up strong in spirit,
prepared the people for the coming of the Lord,
and baptized them in the Jordan to wash away their sins.
Help us, who have been baptized into Christ,
to be ready to welcome him into our hearts,
and to grow strong in faith by the power of the Spirit.
We ask this through Jesus Christ,
the light who is coming into the world.
Amen.

**Lord Jesus, light of the world,
John told the people to prepare,
for you were very near.
As Christmas grows closer day by day,
help us to be ready to welcome you now.
Amen.**

People of God: return!
You are called to be God's own.
From the mountains announce the good news.
God comes in justice and peace,
to all who follow his ways.
You are God's children.
**Lord, make us one in the peace of Christ
today and for ever.
Amen.**

Psalm: 126

¹ When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,^[a]
we were like those who dream.
² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
'The LORD has done great things for them.'
³ The LORD has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

⁴ Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Song: Light of the World

(click link) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06ZpCUjQIjU>

Invitation to Confession

When the Lord comes,
he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness,
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.
Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

Confession:

**Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly, love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.**

Absolution:

May the God of love and power
Forgive us and free us from our sins,
Heal and strengthen us by His Spirit,
And raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Reading 1: 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil. ²³ May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Gospel Reading: John 1: 6– 8, 19-28

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.

⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹ This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' ²⁰ He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.'²¹ And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?'

He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.'²² Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' ²³ He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord"', as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴ Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵ They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?'

²⁶ John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷ the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.'

²⁸ This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Talk: Brenda Sheppard, Authorised Local Preacher

(click link) <https://youtu.be/gkSYYDDHEXA>

Song: Come thou long expected Jesus

(click link) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgjoTIJQwjl>

The Creed

We say together in faith:

**Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.**

We believe in God the Father,
who created all things:
**for by his will they were created
and have their being.**

We believe in God the Son,
who was slain:
**for with his blood,
he purchased us for God,
from every tribe and language,**

from every people and nation.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit:

the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!'

Even so come, Lord Jesus!

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession:

(Please add in names and circumstances known to you in the appropriate place)

Almighty God, we bring our prayers and
the concerns of our hearts to you.

Our prayers for those around us,
those we love and care for,
those we hear of first, or second-hand,
those whose situations cause us pain, anguish and distress.

As Advent preparations gather pace and
thoughts turn to celebrating the birth of Jesus,
we pray for those who are unaware of what
Christmas is all about;

for those who know nothing of your nativity,
who haven't felt your presence,
experienced your love or shared that joy.

Advent God,

hear our prayer.

For those countries embroiled in war and violence.

For those for whom Christmas will come and go with
violence, injury and death all around them;

for those who have no home, safety or security.

We pray especially for those living in the West Bank,
which seems so far from what we knew as we look on and feel people's pain.

We remember to Ukraine and the violence meted out by the
Russian regime, and so many other war-torn countries.

Advent God,

hear our prayer.

For the leaders of the nations who met at the COP28 climate
change conference - may they act on the agreements they made.

And may they and we, the world in all its fullness,
engage with the reality of global warming and
the danger to life in all its forms.

Advent God,

hear our prayer.

For those who are re-experiencing pain and anguish as a
result of the Covid enquiry and all the questions,
answers and confusions that we hear daily.

For those who have tried to move on in life post-COVID,
after illness and the death of family and friends.
For all those involved in decision-making and in caring,
and now in investigating and probing.
May there be honesty, transparency, care and concern for all involved.
Advent God,
hear our prayer.

For those who are frightened of the weeks to come because
of debt that burdens them,
because of no or not enough work,
or insufficient income.
For those who must choose between eating or heating.
For those upset that they can't give the gifts they
want to those they love and care for.
Advent God,
hear our prayer.

For those who are ill, physical or mental illness,
who can see no improvement nor a path to better health.
For those who await tests and operations,
fearful of the outcome and their future prospects.
For those who are dying and know that death is near,
may they know care, love and support and
may they feel enveloped in a peace beyond understanding.
Advent God,
hear our prayer.

For all those we will meet and share with this coming week,
that they may see through us the light of Christ.
That they may feel your love and presence through us.
That they may see what a difference you make to our
lives and experience for themselves what a difference you
can make to their lives.
May love, joy, hope, peace, light and life be shared amongst us.
Advent God,
hear our prayer.

Bless us, Almighty God, and those for whom we have prayed.
Amen.

The Collect:

God for whom we watch and wait,
you sent John the Baptist to prepare
the way of your Son:
give us courage to speak the truth,
to hunger for justice,
and to suffer for the cause of right,

with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

And may the Lord when he comes
find us watching and waiting,
now and at all times.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever.

Amen.

*Let us pause for a moment to bring ourselves
and all that we offer to God and give Him thanks.*

*Usually, at this point in the service, we take up our offering;
let us pause for a moment to bring ourselves and
all that we offer to God and give Him thanks.*

Song: Everlasting God
(click link) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuudVoMyZyE>

Blessing:

Christ the Sun of Righteousness
shine upon you,
scatter the darkness
from before your path,
and make you ready to meet him
when he comes in glory;
and the blessing of God almighty
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with us, and all those whom we love,
this day and always.
Amen

*As we come to the end of this service, we can remember each other as
we have tea, coffee and biscuits, and continue to pray for each other.*