



Second Sunday of Advent: 6th December

Father God help us to come to you this morning with open and thankful hearts. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes with knowing you. Be with us as we walk in your light, rejoice in your love and reflect your glory.

Amen

Hymn 527: On Jordan's bank

Welcome

The Lord be with you,
and also with you

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen

Prayer of Confession

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in life eternal through Jesus Christ our lord. **Amen**

Collect

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for ever.

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 40:1–11

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?"

"All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever." You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Hymn 691: Thy kingdom come

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:1-8

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

Glory to you, O Lord

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way”— “a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Rosey Feuell

It’s been quite a year, hasn’t it... offering little for our comfort? Yet today we hear that God is calling us precisely to be comforted. What is our expectation? Fortunately and unfortunately, we always expect *something* in life, even in disturbing situations. Is it this time just a reasonable Christmas we focus on, family meetings, depressing weather, or the coming Covid vaccines? “Comfort, comfort my people, tenderly,” God says, “round the heart”. The time of new beginnings has come. Mark, the Gospel writer - in another way, with his lion’s voice of urgency - presents the predicted voice crying in the wilderness, recalling prophets Malachi as well as Isaiah, calling us to listen to the voice announcing with wild energy new possibilities of turning round in repentance, being forgiven – fulfilling those powerful promises of old. The Isaiah passage opens the Book of the Consolation of Israel. Mark is opening to us the gospel book of the good news of Jesus, God’s Son, coming into view afresh. We are drawn into new beginnings that bring other eras to conclusion, opening out the future.

The prophet reminds us of our suffering and sins, our fragility, as we’re likened to the flowers of the field. Mark introduces our need of changing, repenting, and a Jesus Whose greatness towers over His messenger John: “I am not worthy to untie His sandals.” – but Mark suggests there is more to come.

The prophet outlines for us the preparations for a royal visit, a road through the desert: “a highway for our God.” Elsewhere he has told us the desert way will blossom and travellers will be safe there, experiencing everlasting joy, seeing the back of sorrow. So it is something like the red carpet arrival for a VIP: this route by which God comes and shows Himself. Whose then is the voice calling out?

Mark later in time attempts an answer. John the Baptist is calling us, ahead of the Visitor, the One Who seems to stir the crowds to come to John. But John is unspectacular: dressed roughly in camel skins, eating food from the wild. It’s someone more powerful *he* points out, coming in next. This is only stage one: wash your sins away in the Jordan, notice the real Power coming to gather you in: “ I baptised with water; He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.” John is not IT, the prophets are not IT: the genuine Lord and Saviour is on the way, nearly into view.

Abraham, Jacob, Isaiah, knew about Him; now we are to set aside our weaknesses, our flower-fading reliability, and face deeper truth: “the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand for ever. “ For Isaiah it’s worthwhile to “get up to a high mountain” , to shout this far and wide. For Mark, the emphasis is on preparing that way in our desert, straightening out the paths and arousing all our receptors.

What are we really looking for? What am I? Advent gives us a special opportunity to welcome Jesus, intuited and foretold by our earliest ancestors, by the poetic prophets’ verses and warnings. John, who was near Him, was in his own eyes not worthy of Jesus’s status: “unworthy to untie the thong of His sandals”. – but once again we have the opportunity to bring our condition to Jesus as we stoop down to acknowledge His greatness, to bring Him who we are.. and to open ourselves to His transforming.

Let Him run a road through our hearts/my heart; let Him flash out His glory and win us/me over. The One foretold seems to be feared: “the Lord God comes with might, His arm rules” – but when the vision clears, we see someone of infinite compassion and gentleness: “He will feed His flock like a shepherd, He will gather the lambs in His arms.”

It’s not about keeping rules we’ve often broken, now it’s about giving yourself over to Him – not just because you’re curious like the crowds flocking through the Jordan Valley. It’s being drawn to the person who is Himself the good news, the comfort-giver, the constantly life-giving one, even when the summer has died away and it’s a long time till the next, through the dangers and the dark.

Today we also remember St. Nicholas, coming to scatter generous gifts among the poor and wretched, his feast marked by loving customs throughout northern Europe. His figure is somehow lit by a familiar brightness.

Let’s attend to this and because of it collect our thoughts and affections to welcome Jesus the Saviour, and accept how He generously sets us free and streams blessings on us: “He will,” after all,”baptise us with the Holy Spirit, John proclaims. Let’s see Jesus coming down the road holding comfort and restoration out to us in both hands as we listen to Handel’s Messiah, saying, “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people.”

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers: Sally Bard

Almighty God, in many and various ways you spoke to your chosen people by the prophets; now you have given us, in your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, the fulfilment of the hope of Israel: hasten the coming of the day when all things shall be subject to him, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God. **Amen**

God our creator, at this time of pandemic when so many people are suffering, we pray for our nation and nations across the world. Give wisdom beyond human wisdom to our leaders; give strength beyond human strength to health workers and all frontline workers; give comfort beyond human comfort to the very young, the elderly and all who grieve. In these difficult days, heal our lands, we pray. We give you thanks for scientists and regulators and all who have worked so hard to achieve progress in developing vaccines. Be with those whose job it is now to roll out and administer the vaccines. Please continue to inspire people to cooperate and collaborate so that the poorest and most vulnerable across the world may receive what they need.

As we wait and watch, **come Lord Jesus**

God, our good Shepherd, you want to tend, gather and gently lead those you love and give them what is good; help your church here and across the world to hold out the light of the gospel, as it seeks to meet the physical needs of others during this pandemic. As John the Baptist did long ago, may the church prepare the way, so that many may come to know repentance, and the forgiveness and peace offered through the death and resurrection of Jesus, your beloved Son. Hasten the day when faith and hope give way to sight and possession, and love shall be all in all.

As we wait and watch, **come Lord Jesus.**

Loving God, you know us and all that we are facing. We thank you that we can come to you as we are - with all our fears and concerns, our difficulties and challenges. Please draw close to each of us and those we remember before you now. Bring to us your peace and comfort and fill us with your Spirit, so that we may be bearers of your grace and hope to others. Protect us, encourage us and keep us, in the name of your Son Jesus Christ; in his face you have revealed to us a glimpse of your glory and so we rejoice.

As we wait and watch, **come Lord Jesus. Amen**

The Peace

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Hymn 359: Jesus shall reign

Lord's Prayer

**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 for ever.

Amen.

Hymn 161: Father hear the prayer we offer

Remembering the Lord's Supper:

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal - with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends - we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

Hymn 656: The race that long in darkness pined

Closing Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ. Amen

If you have any prayer or pastoral needs, please don't hesitate to contact

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