

# Third Sunday of Advent (13.12.2020)

John the Baptist

## **HYMN: Joy to the world**

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!  
Let all their songs employ;  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Sing songs of hope into the waiting air  
and begin the dance of joy,  
for the life of faith is before us.  
Look into the distance and see the rising dawn  
with shining rays like acts of love  
and warming brightness from the heart of God.  
**Let us sing praises to God  
and watch for the Christ  
for in the longing of Advent  
lies the promise of a good which is to come.**

## **WELCOME**

## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

As we light a third candle,  
we remember John the Baptist,  
whose voice proclaimed Christ's coming.

*The third candle is lit*

**God, as we wait for your promise,  
give light, give hope.**

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God, it is sometimes in the centre of the waiting  
that we lose hold of hope,  
when we have moved past the enthusiasm of our beginnings  
but are not yet near enough to see your gifts to us.  
We long for quick answers  
and find ourselves impatient to know your will  
and to see your face more clearly.

*Silent reflection*

Be with us in our anxieties, Jesus Christ.  
**Take our hands and lead us towards your grace.**

O God, sometimes we discover small beginnings  
of your work in us,  
seeds of new life which call us on to greater things  
and we let that die in us because we are afraid;  
or we see that happening in others  
and we fail to encourage them  
in case they may bring changes which we do not want  
or because we fear for them as they take new steps in life.

*Silent reflection*

Be with us in our anxieties, Jesus Christ.  
**Take our hands and lead us towards your grace.  
Forgive us and restore us to your way, we pray. Amen.**

## WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God is faithful to us for ever.  
The Christ will visit us with renewing kindness.  
We are forgiven!  
**Thanks be to God.**

## READINGS

*Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11*

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.  
They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

For I the Lord love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.  
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.  
I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,

as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

### **John 1: 6-8, 19-28**

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' 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.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

### **REFLECTION**

### **INTERCESSIONS**

Loving God, we dare not sing a glad song this day  
without bringing before you those here and in other places  
for whom singing a song of joy  
is a costly and hard-won moment of hope.  
Even our own songs of faith  
sometimes arise from small moments of delight  
in the midst of struggling life.

*Silent reflection*

We come to you now with our prayers for ourselves and others:

*The people pray*

Hear our prayers, O God of hope:  
take the ashes of burnt-out life and the fragments of frail futures  
and cover them with the flowers of your creative possibilities.  
Take the tears of the world and transform our weeping with the oil  
which burns with warmth and light for a new day.  
Lift our hearts with your encouragement and strength  
so that we enter this week filled with your inspiration for a different future.  
**For you are the source of our hope,  
you are the wonder at the end of the waiting  
and you are the God of all eternity.  
Amen.**

## **PEACE**

The peace of God with you all.  
**And also with you.**

## **THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

Christ be with you.  
**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts!  
**We lift them up to God.**

Let us give thanks to God.  
**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We thank you, O God, for the pausing and the waiting,  
the going down deep into our lives  
which reveals to us unexpected love  
from you, from others and even from ourselves.

We thank you that there never is a time  
when we know all that there is to know,  
when we have received all that there is to come  
or have seen all that there is to see.

We thank you that, in the face of certainty,  
you bring in a whole new day  
and that as the barriers to good seem to enclose us,  
you break life open in miracles of grace.

We give you thanks that the vulnerable Child, Jesus,  
is placed in human hands and takes human life,  
that we may believe that a grander love  
may arise from within our midst.

And so we praise you  
with the faithful of every time and place,  
joining with the whole creation in the eternal hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of power and vulnerability,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Come and deliver us, God the giver of life.  
Blessed is the One who comes in the name of our God.  
Come and deliver us, God the giver of life.**

## **THE INSTITUTION**

## **THE INVOCATION**

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

## THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

This is the life of God,  
broken and poured out for us.  
The gifts of God for the people of God.

The president, having sanitised hands, will put on a face covering. This will be worn throughout the distribution.

Communion will be administered in one kind only. Each communicant should sanitise their hands and then extend their hands to receive holy communion with their face covering in place, which should be un-looped in order to consume the consecrated bread, and then immediately replaced.

Care will be taken during the distribution not to touch hands – should this happen both the president and the communicant should sanitise their hands immediately.

If preferred, it is perfectly acceptable to remain seated to receive. Those who wish to receive a blessing should indicate by crossing their hands over their chest. A blessing will be given without the use of touch.

*A prayer for those who remain at home to say during communion:*

*Lord Jesus,  
together we have remembered your saving acts.  
Be present with us now,  
though we cannot be present with one another:  
come to us through bread and wine,  
though we cannot taste or share them,  
and remain in our hearts, we pray.  
Amen.*

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, we give you grateful thanks  
for all that lies within this sacred feast.  
**May our lives show the signs  
that love is possible,  
grace is believable  
and compassion is our way of life.  
This we pray in your name. Amen.**

*The notices may be given.*

## **COMMISSIONING**

Go now.

The Christ is near and soon we will hear sounds of joy.

Go in peace.

## **BENEDICTION**

And may the whole earth be renewed in its God,  
the universe sound with Christ's promise of coming life  
and the Spirit surround us with a cloud of grace. **Amen.**

Please remain seated for a few moments while the organist plays the hymn.  
You will be invited to leave, household by household, to ensure that we  
maintain safe social distancing and avoid congestion at the door as people  
leave church. Thank you for your patience and understanding in these  
difficult times.

## **HYMN: Hills of the north, rejoice**

Hills of the north, rejoice,  
river and mountain-spring,  
hark to the advent voice;  
valley and lowland, sing.  
Christ comes in righteousness and love,  
he brings salvation from above.

Isles of the southern seas,  
sing to the listening earth;  
carry on every breeze  
hope of a world's new birth:  
in Christ shall all be made anew;  
his word is sure, his promise true.

Lands of the east, arise!  
He is your brightest morn;  
greet him with joyous eyes,  
let praise his path adorn:  
your seers have longed to know their Lord;  
to you he comes, the final Word.

Shores of the utmost west,  
lands of the setting sun,  
welcome the heavenly guest  
in whom the dawn has come:  
he brings a never-ending light,  
who triumphed o'er our darkest night.

Shout, as you journey on;  
songs be in every mouth!  
Lo, from the north they come,  
from east and west and south:  
in Jesus all shall find their rest,  
in him the universe be blest.

Charles Ernest Oakley (1832-1865)  
and Editors of *English Praise*

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