

twelvebaskets



ADVENT 2C

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Second Sunday of Advent - Year C
8th December 2024



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

170 STF – Darkness like a shroud covers the earth OR

177 STF – Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

169 STF – Come thou long-expected Jesus OR

174 STF – Light a candle in a darkened place

Readings: Malachi 3:1-4; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

Hymn:

508 STF – Purify my heart, let me be as gold OR

188 STF – There's a light upon the mountains

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

180 STF – O come, O come Immanuel OR

7 STF – God, who made the stars of heaven

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice OR

646 STF – Come and let us sweetly join Christ to praise in hymns divine

Blessing

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Call to worship

Advent God, we are waiting for you.
Advent God, come amongst us.
Advent God, we look to your coming,
Trusting in the power of Immanuel,
God with us.
Amen.¹

Hymn:

170 STF – Darkness like a shroud covers the earth OR
177 STF – Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Opening Prayers

Let us pray.

Still your hearts, your minds,
Your flickering anxious thoughts.

Today we come to worship you, Lord God, in the middle of a season that for many feels hectic and frantic and stressful - and for others, lonely and quiet and sad.

Today, as we come to you in worship, Lord God, we bring ourselves just as we are.

In the stillness of the next few moments, and as part of our opening prayers, I invite you just to think of a word - or perhaps more than one - to describe how you are feeling today. How might you summarise where you are today?

If you've got an easy way to write those down, you could do that. Or you can just repeat them in your mind or under your breath.

Offer them as prayer. Offer yourself, just as you are, as prayer.

We are here, Lord.

[Hold a time of stillness, perhaps with some quiet keyboard music.]

We are here Lord, fully ourselves.
We give you thanks for all we have received.
We are sorry for all we have failed to do.
We are grateful that you forgive us and accept us, just as we are.
Thank you, Holy God.

We are here to worship, bringing our whole selves to you. May you use each one of us, and our own unique calling, to build your Kingdom here on Earth.

Come, Lord Jesus.
Amen.²

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Today's all age talk was written by former Methodist Youth President James Carver. Let's listen to his words now...

'Prepare ye the way.'

As I go through life, there are many things I have to prepare for, for example, an unexpected bill or a job interview. My ADHD sometimes affects me in weird ways, but often I can do things which count as unexpected:

- making a list
- asking for help from people I trust
- analysing what went wrong and how I can avoid the mistake in the future.

However, also there are some occasions in life where you cannot plan and that's okay, I recently, as I'm writing these words, lost my job unexpectedly and I spent ages blaming myself for not creating a backup plan and making sure I had enough savings.

I felt secure of in my job and when I lost it I was like "oh what do I do?" I failed.

Unfortunately these things do happen but when they do I always remind myself that I did the best I could with information I had at the time. These are often the moments when we encounter God's grace.

However, there are some things in life when you know exactly what was or is going to happen and one of those is the coming of Jesus the first time or the second time.

For as it is written in today's passages, which we'll hear later in our service, there were occasions where we knew exactly what would happen, when it would happen, how it would happen, and what we needed to get by. However, despite the information we get from John the Baptist, do you think that people living at that time all shared in the blessing? Do you think they were busy getting out their best rug for the Sunday morning? Do you think they'd have cleaned all of their rooms (and forced their children to clean theirs) just in case a Lord came round?

Of course not. They didn't bother. The only people who understand the importance of the prophecies, were those who felt it was important.

What I want you to do before we continue with this service is to try and picture yourself in your everyday life. Imagine you are walking down the street and there is an individual who sleeps rough and they have got this big banner which says, "the Lord is coming". What would you do? What would your reaction be? Would you believe that person or would you just think they might be mentally ill or looking for attention. Basically, my question is, are you ready for the Advent of Jesus' coming this year?

Amen.³

³ All Age Talk written by James Carver

Hymn:

169 STF – Come thou long-expected Jesus OR

174 STF – Light a candle in a darkened place

Readings: Malachi 3:1-4; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

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Reflections on the readings

John the Baptist is a fabulous New Testament character! And a reminder that there is a space for everyone in God's kingdom. In this story, the outcast, the eccentric, the bizarre guy with the locust-eating habit finds himself heralded and blessed, as the one making space for the coming of the son of God, the arrival of the Christian religion, and the transformation of human history.

John steps out of the shadows, and acts as the model for us all. No matter how wild, no matter how eccentric, no matter how much we might feel like we don't 'fit in', Jesus is calling us. We have a part to play. *You* have a part to play. Are you ready?

Have you read, or seen, the *Lord of the Rings*? There is a moment in that story that reminds me of this John the Baptist story. Frodo – the main character – turns to Gandalf – the figure of wisdom and guidance throughout the story – and says: 'I wish the ring had never come to me, I wish none of this had ever happened'. Gandalf's wise and empowering response is: 'so do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.'

It is a seminal moment in the story, and a much used and shared quote, but it also has a lot to say to us today, about vocations and callings and making the most of what we have. Perhaps, as we each reflect on what it is that we are supposed to do with the 'time that is given to us', we can learn from John the Baptist.

How can we be more like John? Firstly, we can point people towards Jesus. John the Baptist is ordained to make a path in the wilderness, to point out the significance of the person who is following him, to baptise Jesus and bless his ministry. He himself is not the light, but he has come to testify to the light, to point people towards the light.

In times of mental or physical strain, we need people to point to Jesus' invitation: 'come to me all who are weary and heavy-laden' and become a society that offers shelter, comfort and acceptance to all.

In times of argument and disruption in our families and with our friends, we need people to point to Jesus' way of love and his invitation to 'love our neighbour'.

In places affected by war and conflict, we need people to point to the peaceful ways of Jesus.

In times of lying and fake news, we need people to point to Jesus' commitment to being the way, the truth and the life – can we find a way to the truth again, here at the end of 2024?

What about you? Are there people around you, in your family, in your community, on your Facebook-friends-list, who you could point towards Jesus today? Are there people you

could demonstrate Jesus' love, truth and hope towards today? This week? In the months ahead?

Let's take a moment now to think of someone, or a situation, in which we can play the John the Baptist role in the week ahead. Helping ourselves, or someone in our lives to see Jesus. You might like to write it down, to make a note in your phone, or just spend this moment praying for that person or situation, it might even be yourself...

[Pause to give people space to reflect].

The second way we can learn from John the Baptist is to find ways to step outside the systems and structures of modern life, in order to show how they are failing people and causing hurt.

John the Baptist is a disruptor. He sees the injustices and inequalities of his time, he sees the way the religious institutions have become part of the way that the status quo is maintained. And, rather than take part in that, he chooses to step outside of it. He heads into the wilderness, he becomes the New Testament's 'wild man', and ultimately he upsets the authorities so much he is killed by the royal household.

We can't all take on that role (but just imagine if we could!) and we are not all called to put our lives at risk in pursuit of a revolutionary agenda. But, as Christians, we are invited to hear Jesus' words about being 'in the world but not of it' and to examine our relationship with the status quo, the establishment figures of our time, the systems and structures that create fortunes for a few wealthy shareholders and leave millions in abject poverty. We may not be able to fully remove ourselves from those systems and structures, we may not be able to wear animal skins and head for the wilderness, but to what extent are you able to step outside of those systems today? How are you able to call out injustice where you see it?

Are you able to change your banking habits, your shopping arrangements, your travel plans, to challenge the status quo and call into doubt those who enable injustice and abuse to continue?

John shows us the power of that move – the move to step outside the systems, and the power that comes from pointing to Jesus (rather than ourselves or the institutions we are a part of) as the answer. Can we be so bold?

How does that change the way you approach Advent? Are you already up-to-your elbows in Christmas planning and packing and wrapping and baking? Or are you able to withdraw a little, to make a little space, to spend some time waiting, reflecting, praying, yearning? To step outside the system?

Today, rather than being called into some new action, another thing for the to-do-list, a new cause or injustice you could get involved with...instead of all that (and there will be plenty of time for all that), today you are called to pause.

Called to wait.

Called to breathe.

Called to listen to the still small voice of the invisible, immortal God.

Immanuel. God is with us. God is with us. God is with us. God is with you. God is calling you, and me, and all of us. Can we prepare a way for the Christ in the wilderness?

Amen.⁴

⁴ Reflection written by Tim Baker

Hymn:

180 STF – O come, O come Immanuel OR

7 STF – God, who made the stars of heaven

Prayers of intercession

God of this Advent season, we turn to you in prayer.

This Lord's day, we give you thanks for all those stories where we can hear more about your love and your presence among us.

Today we especially give thanks for John the Baptist, and how he shows us the art of preparing the way for our Saviour.

God of every Sunday and every season, guide and empower all preachers of the word and ministers of the sacraments.

May all who share your love and glory through the arts, music, creativity and publishing, be blessed and inspired this day – as they prepare a way for your coming, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy Lord of freedom and grace, today we take a moment to pray for all currently held prisoner by tyranny and oppression, and for all whose eyes are blind to your glory and deaf to your word.

In the stillness, we pray for all who whose lives are darkened by fear. Shine your Advent light, O God, and may we make a way for your coming into places of injustice, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Christmas God of gifts and graces, we give thanks for all who have taught us in the faith and led us to you. Today we especially pray for teachers and Sunday school teachers, for families, friends and all who are dear to us.

As we think of those close to us, we pray also for those we know to be living with pain, challenge and exhaustion at this time.

In the midst of the business and stress, help us to prepare a way for your coming, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Lord of love, we pray for all who are consumed with hatred, all who do not know how to accept or receive forgiveness, all who are not at peace with themselves or the world.

Blessed Lord, hear us and help us to prepare a way for your coming, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

We thank you for your grace to us Lord God, for the many blessings we have received. In this moment, we commit ourselves to you again, to responding to grace with grace, to love with love. Help us to use our gifts to love our neighbours as ourselves,

In Jesus' name,

Amen.⁶

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Hymn:

189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice OR

646 STF – Come and let us sweetly join Christ to praise in hymns divine

Blessing

Purify our hearts, O Lord, that we might make space for you to change and transform us.

Open our minds to thoughts of you, that we might be a people of learning and growth.

Engage our spirits, and help us to connect to the hum of the spiritual base-note that is all around us.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker