

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE, RASTRICK

Welcome to Morning Worship on the 3rd Sunday of Advent

13th December 2020

Click on the underlined links to take you to safe content on the internet.

If you are able light a candle as you start the service and if others are in the house encourage them to reading some of the service with you.

Introduction

We light the third candle which reminds us of John the Baptist, who proclaimed the Kingdom of God and baptised Jesus in the Jordan.

As we hope for your arrival,
as we pray for peace in our living,
as we wait and watch and wonder
God give us joy this Advent season
revel the good news of your birth
in us and in our world, Amen

O Lord, open our lips

All: and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Reveal among us the light of your presence

All: that we may behold your power and glory.

Blessed are you, Sovereign God of all,
to you be praise and glory for ever.

In your tender compassion

The dawn from on high is breaking upon us

To dispel the lingering shadows of night

As we look for your coming among us this day,

Open our eyes to behold your presence

And strengthen our hands to do your will

That the world may rejoice and give you praise.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All Blessed be God for ever.

Prayer of Penitence

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.

**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**

Hymn: [All my hope on God is founded](#)

The Liturgy of the Word - [Click Here](#)

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-end read by Holly Mason

Second Reading: John 1: 6-8, 19-28 read by Cherry Fancourt

Reflection prepared by Rev Stephen Hannam

I know the Bishop used the witness of John the Baptist in his sermon last week to illustrate the reality of the message of Mark. Today our Gospel reading focuses on John and his encounter with the priests and Levites and today we also light our Advent candle remembering John and his message.

So if you recall the words of the Bishop last week and add what I am going to say today perhaps we will have an idea of what John was about. To start with I think it's interesting that up to now Jesus has been called:-

The Word, The Light and The Son of God

Now in this reading John calls Jesus **The Christ**.

The New Revised Standard Version refers to Jesus as "The Messiah" the other word for the Christ. Perhaps that's something worth noting and perhaps something for us all to think about. But I suppose the question for us today is who is this John and what do we know about him?

Well we know that he was born about six months before Jesus and we know that he was the cousin of Jesus. But what else can we find? Most people think that he began his preaching career at about 29 or 30 years of age. So again, he was born a bit before Jesus and he began his ministry a bit before Jesus. We also know that he was the son of a priest and that he was well known to the people.

Matt 3 v 5 tells us that many people from Jerusalem and Judea went out to hear him. (And maybe to see this odd fellow) I think it's important to remember that there

hadn't been a prophet in Israel for over 400 years. So when this strange man started his ministry "Filled with the Holy Spirit" it's not surprising the people started to take notice.

We see how his message made the establishment very uncomfortable. After all he could be a threat to them. So they try to work out who this man was:- Could he be the Christ?

They can see he's growing in popularity and they can see how his preaching was upsetting and agitating the people. This couldn't be allowed to continue something had to be done! So the Jews sent out priests and Levites to question him:- "Who are you?" they asked. Then comes John's answer:- *"I am not the Christ."* *"Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"* *"I am not."* *"Are you the Prophet?"* *"NO"* *"Then who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"* Verse 20 - He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, *"I am not the Christ."*

So when they asked him who he was he told them who he was not!! *"I am not the Christ."* Next time I get an unwanted phone call and they say *Is that Mr Hannam I think I will reply "I am not the Queen!"*

I like this whole passage because in a way it directs us. It makes you think. For me, wrapped up in this, is something for all of us here today – it's something about witness. John replies in the words of Isaiah:- "I am the voice of one calling in the desert. "make straight the way for the Lord."

It seems John is a witness. But it is not about him. He is pointing the way, pointing at the one who will follow. And I guess that's what it's about with us. We too are witnesses not the story. Our own stories about how we have come to know Jesus are not really about us. They are about Jesus. We too are pointing the way. The most important part of our testimony, our story, our witness, is Jesus. Not the how's where's but the focus of our story that is Jesus

It's wonderful to know how we all came to Christ. But the most important bit is about how we live our lives with Jesus. Because that is what our friends, relations, and the world sees in each of us. They see Jesus through what we do and say. Through how we live our lives.

John came to prepare the way for Jesus. Now it's not likely we will be called to do just that but, if you think about it, on a smaller scale we are the only way people today are going to meet with the risen Jesus. Through our witness. Through the Advent light of Christ in our lives.

So when we are asked Who are you and what do you say about yourself? Like John we can all say:- *"I am not the Christ."*

BUT I KNOW HIM!!

Amen

Hymn: [Wait for the Lord](#)

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of intercession prepared by Margaret Ellis [Click Here](#)

A Prayer for Church Growth

God of Mission
Who along brings growth to your church,
Send your Holy Spirit to give
Vision to our planning
Wisdom to our actions
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you,
And in service to our local community,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Awaiting his coming in glory, as our Saviour taught us, so we pray
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.

The Collect for today

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**

Hymn [Tell out, my soul](#)

Final Prayer

Almighty God,
purify our hearts and minds,
that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again
as judge and saviour
we may be ready to receive him,
who is our Lord and our God. **Amen**

Our service ends with the Grace,
The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.