

**Sunday - 6<sup>th</sup> December 2020 Advent 2**

*If you can, have a candle (or two) ready to light with the Advent prayer.*

**Opening Prayer**

Come Lord and bless us all:  
Bless us with the comfort of your coming,  
for we need you  
and look for the renewal of every spiritual gift.  
Bless us with the challenge of your coming  
for we are careless people,  
casual in our service,  
and need a sharp reminder of our calling  
Bless us with the light of your coming  
for the world is often a dark place,  
and we need new evidence  
that light will always conquer darkness  
Bless us with the hope of your coming  
for we sometimes despair,  
and need the reassurance  
that evil cannot win the final victory  
Bless us with the humility of your coming  
for pride often rules our day,  
and we long for the simplicity of your birth.  
Come, Lord! Your people are waiting. **Amen**

**STF 169 Come thou long expected Jesus**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkZFhzNbp8k>

Come, thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set thy people free  
From our fears and sins release us  
Let us find our rest in thee  
Israel's strength and consolation  
Hope of all the earth thou art  
Dear desire of every nation  
Joy of every longing heart  
  
Born thy people to deliver  
Born a child and yet a king  
Born to reign in us forever  
Now thy gracious kingdom bring  
By thine own eternal spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone  
By thine own sufficient merit  
Raise us to thy glorious throne  
  
Come Thou long-expected Jesus  
Bring your light again we pray.  
From addiction and darkness free us,  
Shine the light of glorious day.  
Through your Church, Lord, bring your gospel  
To the schemes of this dear Land,  
So that all might see your glory  
And sing praises to the Lamb.

**Advent Candle Prayer**

As we gather today,  
let us each light a candle of peace.  
We can know peace when we turn away from sin  
and accept God's forgiveness.  
And we can bring that peace into our world  
as we love and forgive each other.  
Let us pursue mercy, love and peace  
in company with all those who call on the  
Lord. Amen

**Reading: Mark 1:1-8**

**A reflection for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent**

Now listen, John the Baptist would not be the kind of preacher you'd invite to your Church Anniversary - you wouldn't get a cosy message! And he's odd - clothed in camel's hair, eating locusts and wild honey.

But we're told that "people from the whole Judaeon countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him". Not only that, but they were baptised in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Just imagine the scene.

I see business-people, dishonest, and feeling guilty about it. Among them are a few tax-collectors, hated by everybody. I see people fed up with a formal Temple worship that is no help in their daily lives. There are disabled people, and destitute men and women, some with illness that blighted them for years. I see a few young people, hanging on to his every word. Of course, there are some just gaping, and there are critics, waiting to condemn him. They're all there. This vast crowd of people, very different, but all there because of what they'd heard. That here was a man who had some Good News, who might bring hope and meaning for their lives.

So, they come, walking for miles to hear this preacher. They come because in different ways they are all in pieces, disappointed people. They want some Good News. And we too are in that crowd - waiting for Good News after a disastrous year. But what is the good news?

I have a CD with songs by an American a cappella women's group, named "Sweet Honey in the Rock." They sing a spiritual, "Good News", and between the verses one of the group says "It's Good News, not Good Times! It's a hard time when you take up the cross".

And the message of John the Baptist is not about "Good Times". His news seems bleak,

even harsh. He quotes the prophet Isaiah "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight". And he preaches about repentance - for the forgiveness of sins. This does not seem an immediate answer to their needs. They have walked all this way to find out about Good Times. They want their lives to improve. They want to find God. Yet the Gospel passage tells us that many of them listened to him and were baptised.

Would we be in that crowd? Are we as open to God as those people? To make a straight path, and clear everything that stops us being open to God? This is not about making ourselves worthy - God can transform us. But our pride and priorities can get in his way!

What does it mean today when John says 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight'?

- What are the things within us that are obstacles between us and God?
- What might need clearing away before we are ready to allow God's grace into our lives?
- Are there some relationships that have become twisted and need to be set right?

In this season of Advent let's "prepare the way" to become closer to God.

### **Prayers of intercession**

In this Advent season we pray for God's church throughout the world. We pray that we will indeed be a herald of good tidings, speaking in a strong voice of the glory of the Lord revealed in Jesus Christ. Send us ahead:

#### **as messengers of your kingdom**

We pray for all the nations of the world and their leaders. We pray that in all the uneven, rough and unjust places of the world the way of the Lord may be prepared so that equality, healing and justice may come to all his people. Send us ahead:

#### **as messengers of your kingdom**

We pray for the communities in which we live, work and worship. We pray that with God's help we will reveal his glory in the way we live and in his love we will be at peace with all people. Send us ahead:

#### **as messengers of your kingdom**

We pray for all those in particular need who are weak and vulnerable, those downhearted during at this time. We pray that they will be touched by God's gentle tenderness bringing them comfort and strength.

Send us ahead:

#### **as messengers of your kingdom**

Heavenly Father, we bring our prayers to you, trusting in your great faithfulness and compassion. As we look forward to celebrating once again the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ, help us also to look forward to the time of his coming again and to prepare ourselves for that day when your kingdom will at last be established on earth. **Amen**

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father...

### **STF 176 Like a candle flame**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVYX6J25SYE>

Like a candle flame,  
flickering small in our darkness,  
Uncreated light shines through infant eyes

*God is with us, alleluia,  
God is with us, alleluia,  
come to save us, alleluia..  
come to save us,  
Alleluia!*

Stars and angels sing,  
yet the earth sleeps in shadows;  
can this tiny spark set a world on fire?

Yet His light shall shine  
from our lives, Spirit blazing,  
as we touch the flame of His holy fire.

### **Blessing**

To the one whose goodness is without equal.  
Whose love is beyond comparison,  
Whose mercy is beyond understanding,  
and whose power is beyond words,  
be praise and glory,  
worship and thanksgiving,  
now and always. Amen

***Why not put your candle in the window  
every Sunday evening throughout Advent!***

*Today worship materials prepared by  
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