

# Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 8 December 2024 - The Second Sunday of Advent

**Lectionary Readings** (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Baruch 5.1-9 (or Malachi 3.1-4); Canticle Benedictus (Luke 1.68-79); Philippians 1. 3-11; Luke 3. 1-6

## Homily

**Today's homily has been written by Kate Pateman, LLM in the Leverington, Newton & Tydd St Giles Benefice**

Our lives are often marked by times of preparation. At some point most of us will have had at least one big occasion for which we have put in a great deal of preparatory work. Special occasions such as a wedding or the arrival of a new baby; perhaps a party to mark a special anniversary or birthday; or maybe a special church event such as baptism, confirmation or ordination. Significant milestones of our lives; the events that we celebrate with our families and friends. There are even some very organised people who invest time and money in preparing for their own funerals, in order to save their family the trouble when the time comes.

Right now, most of us will be preparing for Christmas. Using the weeks of Advent to prepare spiritually to celebrate of the birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ; and to prepare physically the things that make each of our family Christmas celebrations unique – the presents, the food, the decorations and so on. There will be to-do lists and gift lists, card writing, gift wrapping, and a hundred-and-one things to be accomplished before we get to Christmas Eve and the start of the celebrations proper.

But none of these preparations can compare with the preparation that God has put into the coming of his son into the world. Four hundred years before John the Baptist began his ministry, the Prophet Malachi told of the Lord sending his messenger to prepare the way before him in readiness for the day when the Lord will come into his temple.

Four hundred years on from Malachi, the messenger of the Lord is John, son of Zechariah, a wild man living in the wilderness. It is he to whom the Lord sends his word. Not to all those important-sounding people in the list at the beginning of our Gospel reading. Not the Emperor Tiberius, or Governor Pontius Pilate; not King Herod or his brother Philip; not even the High Priests of the Jews, Annas and Caiaphas. No, the word of God comes to John, and it lays claim to his life.

Hearing, and obeying, the voice of the Lord, John sets out from his home in the wilderness to travel and to preach to all the people of the region around Jordan, proclaiming the way of the Lord and a baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Quoting the Prophet Isaiah, he tells

anyone who will listen that the time is coming for which they have been preparing - the Day of the Lord.

And what is the purpose of John's preaching? What is it that he is calling on the people to do? It is to prepare themselves for the coming of God into the world. To prepare, by baptism and repentance, to meet God in the person of his Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour. John's call to repentance is a call to them to break away from their past lives, to turn around and prepare their hearts to receive the Lord, the Messiah who is coming into the world.

John is the messenger of God, but he is not the message. It is Jesus who is the message. Jesus is the Word of God who is coming into the world to open the way to salvation for all people. As John preaches, he quotes the Prophet Isaiah to emphasise that the Messiah is coming to bring salvation, not only for the Children of Israel, but for the whole world. John proclaims a baptism for the forgiveness of sins; a baptism in the waters of the River Jordan as a sign of repentance and acceptance of a new way of life. As he does so, he is making preparations for Jesus's earthly ministry which is about to begin. His wonderful ministry of love, forgiveness and redemption for everyone.

Here then is the Good News of the ministry of John the Baptizer that we celebrate today. The Good News of the fulfilment of the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi. Be prepared! God is coming! He is coming into the world, a man both human and divine, whose work it is to make clear the path of salvation and open the door to his everlasting kingdom for everyone who will believe in him.

So, as we make our preparations for the Christmas celebrations, let us try not to get lost in the wilderness of our busy lives. Let us try, as the days of Advent go by, to continue to use this time as an opportunity to prepare our own hearts to receive the Word of the Lord, to be ready to welcome Jesus into our lives as our Saviour. Also, let us remember that we are God's hands in the world today. It is for us, as his children, to pray for the work of his Spirit in the hearts and minds of all people throughout the world. To pray for peace on earth. To prepare for the time that we know is coming, when his Kingdom will come into the world and there will be no barrier between his Kingdom in Heaven and his Kingdom here on Earth.

### ***Ways to Engage all Generations***

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder how the people living in the region around Jordan felt when they heard John preach?
- I wonder how you feel about Advent and Christmas?

- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

### ***Suggested intercessions***

Let us pray to the Lord for the word of salvation to be made known to all people.

Strengthen your faithful people as messengers and ministers of your world, that all may hear and believe. Confirm our fellowship in the Gospel and keep us constant in truth until the coming of Christ.

#### ***[Specific petitions for Church, clergy, ministers, congregations .....]***

*Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.*

Make straight the crooked ways of the world where people stumble without guidance and make smooth the rough places where life is hard. Come with your power to bring joy to the nations and knowledge of salvation to all people.

#### ***[Specific petitions for the environment, the peace of world, nations, governments, etc .....]***

*Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.*

Give grace to us, our families and friends, to live together in love and to desire all that is good. Cleanse us from all that holds us back from you.

#### ***[Specific petitions for local societies, charities, family and children's organisations, schools, clubs, etc .....]***

*Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.*

Have mercy on all who are held so fast by sin that they cannot repent. Grant them the true sense of your mercy and the good news of forgiveness. Free those who cannot forgive themselves and give them confidence in your redeeming love. Help us to forgive those who hurt us who we find hard to forgive, and to love those who we find hard to love.

#### ***[Specific petitions for people in prison, the perpetrators and victims of crime, etc .....]***

*Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.*

Have mercy on all who are sick in body, mind or spirit. Give to the suffering the comfort of your presence. Heal the broken bodies, bring peace to the suffering minds, calm the troubled spirits, and wipe away all tears and pain.

#### ***[Specific petitions for the sick in body, mind or spirit .....]***

*Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.*

We pray for the departed whose fellowship is now complete in you. Grant them salvation in the spirit after the death of the flesh.

#### ***[Specific petitions for the departed, the bereaved, year's mind .....]***

*Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.*

Repenting of our sins and trusting in the mercy of Christ, we make our prayers through him.

***Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen***

Adapted from: *Leading Intercessions*, Raymond Chapman (Canterbury Press, 2006)

### **Suggested hymns/songs**

Brother, sister, let me serve you

Come, thou long-expected Jesus

Hark, a thrilling voice is sounding

Long ago, prophets knew

Love divine, all loves excelling

O Jesus, I have promised

On Jordan's bank

The Lord will come and not be slow

Wake, O Wake (Sleepers wake)

When John baptized by Jordan's river

### **Activities to accompany the service:**

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.com/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>  
(weekly@ lectionary resource)