

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
5th December 2021



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

169 STF – Come, thou long-expected Jesus OR

165 STF – Advent candles tell their story

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

166 STF – 'Christmas is coming!' The Church is glad to sing OR

697 STF – Oh freedom, oh freedom, oh freedom

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

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

177 STF – Lo, he comes with clouds descending OR

231 STF – The silent stars shine down on us

What am I being called to?

Hymn:

608 STF – All praise to our redeeming Lord, who joins us by his grace OR

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

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth OR

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

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:

169 STF – Come, thou long-expected Jesus OR
165 STF – Advent candles tell their story

Opening Prayers

A prayer of adoration

Praise be to you, O God, source of all justice and fount of all peace.
You summoned the universe from chaos – amidst the confusion of our lives we
adore you.
You breathed your Spirit into humanity to give life – with the breath we have we
worship you.

In this season of expectation,
we rejoice in your harmony, Creator God,
we receive your peace, Jesus Christ,
we are filled with your hope, Holy Spirit.

Praise be to you, O God.

Amen.

A prayer of thanksgiving

Advent God, we hear your words of hope echoing down the centuries and give you
thanks.

From the dawn of time you have poured out your love on humankind,
when we became slaves, you freed us
when we wandered in the wilderness, you found us,
when we rebelled, you wooed us back
when we had forgotten how to live, you came in Jesus
when we needed courage, you gave us your Holy Spirit.

As we anticipate this season of celebration,
as we rejoice again in your coming amongst us,
we hear your words of hope echoing down the centuries and give you thanks.

Amen.

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

A prayer of confession

Gracious God,

You speak words of hope, but so often we despair;

have mercy Lord.

You call us to peace, but so often we live in discord;

have mercy Lord.

You give us a song of joy, but we rehearse a litany of complaint;

have mercy Lord.

You invite us to seek justice, but we fight for our rights;

have mercy Lord.

We pause in silence to reflect on our own weakness...

[Pause].

In this Advent season, we rejoice to hear your voice offering us forgiveness.

May your Spirit at work in us like sap rising in a tree, enable us to bear fruits of repentance and hope.

In Jesus's name,

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

So I wonder if you know what these words all have in common and if you can finish sentence off?

- Just do... *[Leave a space to see if anyone can guess the last word]*... it (Nike)
- Because you're.... worth it (Loreal)
- Every little ...helps (Tesco)
- Subway eat...fresh (Subway, obviously!)
- Taste the...rainbow (Skittles).

Each one of these are advertising slogans which you might have seen or heard over the years. Adverts were created with the intention to draw people's attention to a product or service. Without realising we see on average 41 adverts every single day!

In our passage today in Luke's gospel we see a biblical advert come to life when we see John the Baptist begin to prepare the way for Jesus. John does this by using Old Testament scripture from Isaiah and says:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,

'Prepare the way for the Lord,

make straight paths for him.

² Opening prayers written by Jill Baker

Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill made low.
The crooked roads shall become straight,
the rough ways smooth.
And all people will see God's salvation.

John quite literally is advertising the coming of Jesus. As we enter this second Sunday of advent, we are preparing ourselves for the coming of the son of God, Jesus. So just like the adverts that we see throughout the day, we need to pay attention to the adverts we see in the Bible!

Let us pray.

Lord, help us to see the signs of your coming. Help us to look forward and be aware of what this Christmas season is all about.

Amen.³

Hymn:

166 STF – 'Christmas is coming!' The Church is glad to sing OR
697 STF – Oh freedom, oh freedom, oh freedom

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

Reflections on the reading

The wild man becomes the way-maker for Jesus' life and ministry.

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?

There is a moment in the *Lord of the Rings* films where 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.

³ All Age Talk written by Matt Forsyth

Let us see if two lessons from the way John the Baptist lived his life and conducted his ministry can help us today.

This first way in which we can 'be like John', is in the way 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 baptize 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 places affected by war and conflict, we need people to point to the peaceful ways of Jesus.

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 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 in 2021?

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 social isolation, physical distancing and Covid-anxiety, we need to point people towards Jesus' message of peace, and hope, and love.

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?

Or perhaps, today, you need to hear John the Baptist's invitation. Perhaps for the first time, or perhaps for the 1,000th. Jesus is here. Here for you. Jesus is inviting you to follow him, to be a part of the community of people seeking to know more of the divine and seeking to show love to those we meet. Will you walk in his way?

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. Will you make the John the Baptist move today?⁴

Hymn:

177 STF – Lo, he comes with clouds descending OR

231 STF – The silent stars shine down on us

What are you being called to?

How does Advent affect you? 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 space a little, to spend some time waiting, reflecting, praying, yearning?

Are you able to defer the gratitude a little, as we all must learn to do, and therefore to live in hope?

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.

Amen.

Hymn:

608 STF – All praise to our redeeming Lord, who joins us by his grace OR

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

Prayers of intercession

Good and gracious God, we give you thanks for all who have told us of your love and your presence among us. We give thanks for John the Baptist preparing the way for our Saviour.

Mighty God, guide and empower all preachers of the word and ministers of the sacraments.

Bless all who proclaim your love and glory through the arts, music, broadcasting and publishing, all who prepare hearts and minds for your coming.

⁴ Reflection written by Tim Baker

Blessed Lord, hear us, and set your people free.

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

We remember all who whose lives are darkened by fear.

Blessed Lord, hear us and set your people free.

We give thanks for all who taught us the faith and led us to you. For all who have given us glimpses of glory. We pray for teachers and Sunday school teachers, for families, friends and all who are dear to us.

We remember any who are having special difficulties or troubles at this time.

Blessed Lord, hear us and set your people free.

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.

We remember all who are anxious and fearful at this time.

We pray for all who are weakened by illness or incapacity.

Blessed Lord, hear us and set your people free.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing 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

Hymn:

738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth OR

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

⁵ Prayers of intercession taken from Glimpses of Glory by David Adam

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

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