

twelvebaskets



ADVENT 3C

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

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Third Sunday of Advent - Year C
12th December 2021



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

186 STF – Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! OR

176 STF – Like a candle flame, flickering small in our darkness

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

171 STF – Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes OR

189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice

Readings: Isaiah 12:2-6, Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 3:7-18

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

404 STF – God's spirit is in my heart OR

188 STF – There's a light upon the mountains

What am I being called to?

Hymn:

627 STF – Everyone needs compassion OR

712 STF – Put peace into each other's hands

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour OR

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy

Blessing

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Call to worship

Here I am to worship,
Here I am to bring myself and let go of myself,
In order to meet with the divine.

Here I am to say that you are my God.
Here I am. Send me.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

186 STF – Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! OR

176 STF – Like a candle flame, flickering small in our darkness

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, or you could play something like one of the Antiphons, recorded by a choral choir.]

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.

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

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

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

On this Third Sunday of Advent, I wonder if you have ever done the game where you have to do the opposite of what someone says? For example if I was to say you need to 'sit down' you would...? Stand up!

Or if I was to say move backwards you would need to... move forwards.

The opposite game helps us understand a little as to what John the Baptist liked to do. The opposite game will help you to think about what John the Baptist is trying to get the people in today's story to understand.

He starts by telling them they need to repent, which simply means to "turn around." Then the way he tells them to turn around is by doing the opposite of what they usually do every day. John tells the people to share their extra stuff instead of not sharing their extra stuff. John tells the soldiers to protect the people instead of scare the people.

Sadly, like every game, John's ministry eventually comes to an end. However, the good news is that the opposite game was lived out and played every day by Jesus, the one who came amongst us during the first Christmas, and who we celebrate again this Christmas season. You see, Jesus lived his life like the opposite game, standing up against those who sought to oppress, to divide, to rule. He was following the way of his Father God.

So the good news is that we can be like Jesus and live our lives opposite to what our culture might be trying to tell us we should. So, when people say naughty words, we don't have to. When people are unkind to others, we can be kind. Living like Jesus sometimes means we are invited to play the opposite game, a more loving game.³

Hymn:

171 STF – Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes OR

189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

³ All Age Talk written by Matt Forsyth

Readings: Isaiah 12:2-6, Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 3:7-18

Reflections on the reading

There are many things we have to wait for in daily life, the full range of the good, the bad and the monotonous! I'm sure a lot of us can sadly sympathise with waiting around for a replacement bus or train? Or waiting around for test or exam results? Or that delivery company that said they would drop a parcel at your house 'somewhere between 7 and 3'? Or how about waiting around for next episode of Doctor Who?

Advent is the season of waiting and preparing. Perhaps some of us are thinking ahead to Christmas and all that there is still to plan. The tension, the apprehension and perhaps even the feelings of dread of what's to come. But before you start thinking about whether or not the turkey is big enough for everyone, take a moment to pause and rest in the moment of now.

Take a moment to think about the year that is about to come to a close.

Take a moment to pause, in the spirit of Advent, before plunging into the Christmas season.

Traditionally, this third Sunday in Advent is known as 'Gaudete Sunday'. Rather than being named after the popular Steeleye Span track, it takes its name from the Latin word 'Gaudete' meaning rejoice – meaning this is the 'Sunday of Joy'. Traditionally, this Sunday opens with those few verses from Philippians we just heard.

Rejoice in the Lord always.

Now, that's a lovely sentiment, but really hard to practice, wouldn't you agree?

I doubt we all felt like rejoicing when the England men's football team lost in the final of the Euros earlier this year. Or when you didn't get that job. Or when you didn't get the exam results you really wanted or felt you needed. Or when you heard about your friend in hospital. When the lockdowns were announced, when you felt cut off from those you love the most, when you couldn't go to that funeral...

I think if we're honest with ourselves there have been times in the last year where rejoicing and being full of joy was the last thing on our minds.

The thing is; when we are at our lowest and can't rejoice, we have a community, a family even, around us to rejoice when we cannot. To be joyful when we cannot. To 'Rejoice in the Lord' when we just cannot. Some of you might know this as the Ubuntu philosophy or 'the belief in humanity towards others.'

That doesn't mean we have to be glib and fake our smiles or pretend to be happy, but it means that there is a base-note about the Christian story that is filled with hope, with opportunity, with potential, with a dawn that comes at the end of a long night, with a resurrection at the most unexpected of times. Can you hear the Advent base-note today?

As we are gathered here, now, on Gaudete Sunday, rejoicing and praising the Lord, let's take this time to rejoice in the little victories from this past year of 2021, for all the good that has happened to us this year. Gaudete invites us to count our blessings, and rejoice in our Lord, always.

In a moment, as part of our prayers, we are going to invite as many people as feel comfortable to share something of your rejoicing. The microphone is going to be open. Open for anyone and everyone to come and just share a few things they want

to rejoice for this year. For all the good, no matter how small you think it may be, it's still worthy of rejoicing over.

So let us rejoice, now and always, in the Lord.

[Depending on how accustomed your church is with opening the floor, you may need to approach a few people before the service to think about what they will say to help get this started].

Holy God, Mother and Father,

We come before you today as human beings; with all our faults and failings, hopes and ambitions.

At this time of advent, a time of waiting and expectation, we take this time to rejoice for the good that has happened in our lives this year.

As we pray, let each of us share the little glimpses of our rejoicing.

After every prayer or sentence is said or shared, we will all say together 'We rejoice with you O God.'

[Begin by sharing an example from your year. Examples might include: For the friends who gave me the kick to carry on when I didn't want to. The pizza night with James, the time to walk through the country lanes. For the daily reminder my mental health is a part of me and doesn't control me].

We rejoice with you O God.

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

404 STF – God's spirit is in my heart OR

188 STF – There's a light upon the mountains

What are you being called to?

Today, our reflection has invited us to think about joy – and the opportunity to rejoice as people who follow Jesus. This is not about being fake or 'happy-clappy', but about finding deep undertones of joy amongst all the pain, uncertainty and anxiety that comes with modern life.

Where do you get your joy?

Take a moment to think about that question, and what it might mean for you and yours. Where is your joy coming from? Are you spending enough time nurturing those sources of rejoicing?

And, as part of a way of nurturing joy, perhaps you'd like to find someone else in your life to ask – at some point this week – 'where do you find your joy?' It's a great conversation starter, and opens up the possibility for conversation and discussion around faith and evangelism. Why not choose someone, right now, who you will ask this of in the week ahead.

⁴ Reflection written by Tim Annan-Hood

Let us pray.

God of all joy, bless our conversations and our desire for connection.

Fill us with your joy, and help us to be people who spread joy in your world – give us an opening this week to being a conversation about joy with someone in our lives.

Bless us by your Spirit,

Amen.

Hymn:

627 STF – Everyone needs compassion OR

712 STF – Put peace into each other's hands

Prayers of intercession

God of Advent, we hold before you a world that needs you.

A world desperate for a God-in-a-manager.

A world crying out for a Prince of Peace.

A world floundering around in search of angel music.

As we wait, as we seek to live open to your coming, and live with the hope of a Christmas God...we pray.

In the quiet, the stillness, of Advent, we offer our prayers for the brokenness around us. In a moment of quiet, we hold up to you, holy Lord, those suffering from within our own families, our friendship groups and from within this congregation.

[Silence]

Advent God, come amongst us.

In a moment of quiet, we hold up to you, holy Lord, those from this communities and the places we come from, those we meet in our daily lives, our colleagues, fellow-commuters or shoppers, people on the street and in the Post Office. May we offer them Advent peace this week, and sense your proximity to those who need you.

[Silence]

Advent God, come amongst us.

In a moment of quiet, we think beyond our immediate surroundings, to the pain of a broken globe: to conflict, disease, poverty, natural disaster, exploitation and oppression.

{Silence}

Advent God, come amongst us.

We look to your coming Lord. We wait, we hope and we seek to build a better world. Guide us by your advent light. So we pray in the name of the light of the world, Jesus Christ.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

Blessing the offering

For all we have received, for all the grace that is at work in our lives, for the gift of this waiting season, we give you thanks Lord God.

May you help us to steward and use these gifts for the glory of your name and the building of your Kingdom.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour OR

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy

Blessing

Christmas is coming.

Holiness is in the air.

The Spirit of God is just waiting to make herself known to you, this day and in this season.

Go out into the world, my friends, and carry the light of the Christ child with you.

Amen.⁷

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker