

Ashburton and Moorland Team

Advent 3

12th December 2021



¶ The Gathering

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Lighting of an Advent wreath or candle

Week 3. John the Baptist

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, just and true,
to you be praise and glory for ever!
Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth
as a burning and shining light.
May we your servants rejoice in his light,
and so be led to witness to him
who is the Lord of our coming Kingdom
Jesus our Saviour and King of the ages.
Blessed be God for ever.

Amen.

Hymn – On Jordan's bank

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVCv6vSVxEc>

On Jordan's bank, the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
come then and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings from the King of kings.

Then cleansed be every Christian breast,
and furnished for so great a Guest!
Yea! let us each our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there.

For Thou art our salvation, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without thy grace our souls must fade,
and wither like a flower decayed.

Stretch forth thine hand, to heal our sore,
And make us rise, to fall no more;
Once more upon thy people shine,
And fill the world with love divine.

All praise, eternal Son, to Thee
Whose advent sets thy people free,
Whom, with the Father, we adore,
And Spirit blessed for evermore.

Words: John Chandler
1876 - 1749

Prayer of Preparation

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

The Summary of the Law

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:
The first commandment is this:
'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'
There is no other commandment greater than these.
On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Confession

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.

**Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us,
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

O Lord Jesus Christ,
who at your first coming sent your messenger
to prepare your way before you:
grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries
may likewise so prepare and make ready your way
by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,
that at your second coming to judge the world
we may be found an acceptable people in your sight;

for you are alive and reign with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

¶ The Liturgy of the Word

Readings

Zephaniah 3.14-end

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
The Lord has taken away the judgements against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.
The Lord, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.
I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;

for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Philippians 4.4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn – Hail to the lord's anointed

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJcuKB93wco>

Hail to the Lord's anointed
great David's greater Son.
Hail in the time appointed
his reign on earth begun.
He comes to break oppression,
to set the captive free,
to take away transgression
and rule in equity.

He comes with succour speedy
to those who suffer wrong,
to help the poor and needy
and bid the weak be strong.
To give them songs for sighing
their darkness turn to light
whose souls, condemned and dying
were precious in his sight.

He shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth
and love, joy, hope, like flowers
spring in his path to birth.
Before him, on the mountains
shall peace, the herald, go
and righteousness, in fountains
from hill to valley flow.

Kings shall fall down before him
and gold and incense bring.
All nations shall adore him
his praise all people sing.
To him shall prayer unceasing
And daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing
a kingdom without end.

O'er every foe victorious
he on his throne shall rest;
from age to age more glorious
all blessing and all-blessed.
The tide of time shall never
his covenant remove.
his name shall stand forever
that name to us is love.

Words: James Montgomery
(1771 – 1854)

Gospel Reading

Alleluia, alleluia.

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Alleluia!

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke
Glory to you, O Lord.

Luke 3.7-18

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'

And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.'

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The Sermon

I've come to see this man standing on the bank of the river in the desert, wearing a coat of camel-hair – he's reputed to live off locusts!

His hair's blowing in the wind, it's so long and unkempt. It's like he's wild rather than tame, an outsider rather than someone you'd invite round for tea.

And it's hot out here – no shade – he's not bothered – he appears wiry and tough. And people are being drawn to him.

I've just come down from Jerusalem to see what the fuss is about – I've been hearing so many stories.

I come from quite a posh bit of Jerusalem – I can afford to live there, where the streets are clean and our houses are well-guarded against burglars and mobs. I can't imagine living in the middle of the desert!

Mind you, it costs a bit to maintain my standard of living, but I earn better than most people, making quite a bit on the side as well. You see, I collect the taxes for King Herod, and he pays me really well.

My house is full of gorgeous furniture, and you should see my wardrobe! I've got a cupboard full of coats – even one of many colours, like Joseph had. I like to look smart, I have to keep up appearances.

What a contrast to this man in the desert – I bet he doesn't have any more than the clothes he stands up in.

John – that's his name. They call him John the Baptist.

So why have I come, I ask myself? What's in it for me?

Well, to be honest, life can be pretty dull, and I don't have many friends, so I thought I'd come and see what the fuss was about.

And so here I am.

I must admit John makes a dramatic picture – his clothes and hairstyle are unique!

What's that he's saying? There's wrath to come unless I repent?

What's he on about? I don't do anything wrong – I do my job, I've never hurt anyone! I'm a son of Abraham – as good as anyone.

Hang on, John's saying that that doesn't count – God can make children of Abraham from the stones around him? But I'm a member of the tribe of Levi – we're special. I count.

And now he's asking if I am bearing any good fruit – what, like apples or figs? If I don't bear fruit I will be thrown into the fire! How can a man bear fruit, what does he mean?

But it sounds as though I might be in trouble – I don't want to end up like that.

"Hey, John, what should we do?" the people around me are asking. "John, what's all this about bearing fruit?"

"Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none," he says.

That's nonsense – I've earned my cupboard full of coats by working hard – they're mine. If someone doesn't have a coat, they've just not worked hard enough – it's their fault. Even John has that camel-hair coat.

I know, I'll ask him a question myself – that'll throw him.

"Hey, John, teacher, what should I do? I'm a tax collector doing my job – I work for Herod – nothing wrong with that, is there?"

"Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you."

Ouch! How does he know I occasionally take a tiny bit too much? That's ok, isn't it? I mean, everyone does it....

Hey listen, there's some soldiers asking "And we, what should we do?"

"Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

Wow – that's good, serves them right – John's spot on there – we've all had enough of those soldiers not guarding our homes as they should, and demanding bribes for keeping our streets free from mobs. They've cost me an arm and a leg.... About time someone stopped all that.

I've heard enough, John's not going to change my lifestyle. I'm off home now – I could do with a drink, and I need to change my coat before going out for the evening.

But I can't move – something is holding me back – John is looking at me sadly.

And I too feel sad, because he seems to be saying that I am missing out on something.....

It's like my life suddenly seems hollow, and I realise I have no friends, no-one to care for me – and John, with nothing, seems to be so full of confidence and serenity. He has everything.

To my surprise, and very reluctantly, I find myself stepping down the bank to join the queue waiting to be baptised – somehow it just feels the right thing to do.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

The Nicene Creed

***// We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.***

***// We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.***

***For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.***

***On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven***

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

***He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.***

**I / We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**I / We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
I / We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
I / We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.**

The Peace

In the tender mercy of our God,
the dayspring from on high shall break upon us,
to give light to those who dwell in darkness
and in the shadow of death
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with us.

Hymn – Hark the glad sound

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2blvj5-anE>

Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes,
the Saviour promised long!
Let every heart prepare a throne,
and every voice a song.

He comes the prisoners to release,
in Satan's bondage held;
the gates of brass before Him burst,
the iron fetters yield.

He comes the broken heart to bind,
the bleeding soul to cure,
and with the treasures of his grace,
to enrich the humbled poor.

Our glad Hosannas, Prince of Peace,
thy welcome shall proclaim;
and heaven's eternal arches ring,
with thy beloved Name.

Words: Philip Dodridge
1702 - 1751

Prayers of Intercession

United in the company of all the faithful
and looking for the coming of the kingdom,
let us offer our prayers to God,
the source of all life and holiness.

Merciful Lord,
strengthen all Christian people by your Holy Spirit,
that we may live as a royal priesthood and a holy nation
to the praise of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Bless Robert our bishop, and all ministers of your Church,
that by faithful proclamation of your word
we may be built on the foundation of the apostles
and prophets
into a holy temple in the Lord.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Empower us by the gift of your holy and life-giving Spirit,
that we may be transformed into the likeness of Christ
from glory to glory.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Give to the world and its peoples
the peace that comes from above,
that they may find Christ's way of freedom and life.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Hold in your embrace all who witness to your love in the
service of the poor and needy;
all those who minister to the sick and dying;
and all who bring light to those in darkness.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Touch and heal all those whose lives are scarred by sin
or disfigured by pain,
that, raised from death to life in Christ,
their sorrow may be turned to eternal joy.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Remember in your mercy all those gone before us,
who have been well-pleasing to you from eternity;
preserve in your faith your servants on earth,
guide us to your kingdom,
and grant us your peace at all times.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Hasten the day when many will come
from east and west, from north and south,
and sit at table in your kingdom.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We give you thanks
for the whole company of your saints in glory,
with whom in fellowship we join our prayers and praises;
by your grace may we, like them,
be made perfect in your love.

**Blessing and glory and wisdom,
thanksgiving and honour and power,
be to our God for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

(For those in church, the Eucharistic prayer comes here)

Hymn - Hills of the North, rejoice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5LOPA7EqF0>

Hills of the North, rejoice;
river and mountain spring,
hark to the advent voice;
valley and lowland, sing;
though absent long, your Lord is nigh;
he judgment brings and victory.

Isles of the southern seas,
deep in your coral caves
pent be each warring breeze,
lulled be your restless waves:
he comes to reign with boundless sway,
and makes your wastes his great highway.

Lands of the East, awake,
soon shall your sons be free;
the sleep of ages break,
and rise to liberty.
on your far hills, long cold and grey,
has dawned the everlasting day.

Shores of the utmost West,
ye that have waited long,
unvisited, unblest,
break forth to swelling song;
high raise the note, that Jesus died,
yet lives and reigns, the Crucified.

Shout, while ye journey home;
songs be in every mouth;
lo, from the North we come,
from East, and West, and South.
City of God, the bond are free,
we come to live and reign in thee!

Words: Charles Edward Oakley
(1832 - 1865)

¶ Ending

We give you thanks, O Lord, for your heavenly gifts;
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit
that when your Christ comes again
we may shine as lights before his face;
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.

Amen.

The Blessing

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon us,
scatter the darkness from before our path,
and make us ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.

Amen

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