

## Second Sunday of Advent Reflection



We take a breath and come into God's presence.

Holy Spirit draw us close and minister your grace to us. May we recognise your presence in our midst. **Amen.**

At this time of Advent: My soul waits for the Lord: **My soul waits for the Lord.**

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.**

### **Bible Reading: Mark 1:1-8**

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;

the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight,'"

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

### **Reflection**

The writings on John the Baptist lend well to the advent time of preparation. Raw and passionately he asks us 'Are you ready to meet God?'

To prepare and be ready, we need to take the time to be open to God and listen to any gentle promptings of necessary repentance, and changes we might need to make in our lives. It is a time to seek forgiveness- and wholeheartedly receive it. We can let go of the burden of sin and feelings of unworthiness, and look forward. Advent is a time to start afresh and recommit our lives to God.

It is also the time to be expectant of God. To look out for God's presence, the marvels of God – to dream! We might be amazed at what we see and experience.

If we create intentional space to be open to God, we might see signs of God's messengers - angels – the challenging type to help turn our lives around; the touch of kindness type to minister to us and the mystical beauty type to quicken our hearts to the overwhelming possibilities and wonders of God.

We're not just speaking about divine beings but everyday angels – ordinary people that God uses to bring shalom, healing, peace and kindness to others. I'm sure individually and nationally this year we can think of so many.

I wonder if you can think of a time when you have been used by God? When you might have been prompted to call or pray for a person, send a gift, some food, a hug (pre and post Covid) and it turns out it is just what they needed at that desolate moment? And sometimes we won't know we were 'Christ' to them this side of heaven.

I have shared the following story before, but I include it again as it is such a wonderful tale of care and of the wonder of God.

**The Hot Water Bottle:** by Missionary Helen Roseveare

*One night, many years ago in Central Africa,* I had worked hard to help a mother in the labour ward; but in spite of all that we could do, she sadly died leaving us with a tiny, premature baby and a crying, two-year-old daughter.

We would have difficulty keeping the baby alive. We had no incubator. We had no electricity to run an incubator, and no special feeding facilities. Although we lived on the equator, nights were often chilly with treacherous drafts.

A student-midwife went for the box we had for such babies and for the cotton wool that the baby would be wrapped in. Another went to stoke up the fire and fill a hot water bottle. She came back shortly, in distress, to tell me that in filling the bottle, it had burst. Rubber perishes easily in tropical climates. "...and it is our last hot water bottle!". Nothing could be done, there were no drugstores down forest pathways. 'All right,' I said, 'Put the baby as near to the fire as you safely can; sleep between the baby and the door to keep it free from drafts. Your job is to keep the baby warm.'

The following noon, as I did most days, I went to have prayers with many of the orphanage children who chose to gather with me. I gave the youngsters various suggestions of things to pray about and told them about the tiny baby. I explained our problem about keeping the baby warm enough, mentioning the hot water bottle. The baby could so easily die if it got chilled. I also told them about the two-year-old sister, crying because her mother had died. During the prayer time, one ten-year-old girl, Ruth, prayed with the usual blunt consciousness of our African children. "Please, God," she prayed, "send us a water bottle. It'll be no good tomorrow, God, the baby'll be dead; so, please send it this afternoon." While I gasped inwardly at the audacity of the prayer, she added, "...And while You are about it, would You please send a dolly for the little girl so she'll know You really love her?"

As often with children's prayers, I was put on the spot. Could I honestly say, "Amen?" I just did not believe that God could do this. Oh, yes, I know that He can do everything: The Bible says so, but there are limits, aren't there? The only way God could answer this particular prayer would be by sending a parcel from the homeland. I had been in Africa for almost four years at that time, and I had never, ever received a parcel from home. Anyway, if anyone did send a parcel, who would put in a hot water bottle? I lived on the equator!

Halfway through the afternoon, while I was teaching in the nurses' training school, a message was sent that there was a car at my front door. By the time that I reached home, the car had gone, but there, on the veranda, was a large twenty-two pound parcel! I felt tears pricking my eyes. I could not open the parcel alone; so, I sent for the orphanage children. Together we pulled off the string, carefully undoing each knot. We folded the paper, taking care not to tear it unduly. Excitement was mounting. Some thirty or forty pairs of eyes were focused on the large cardboard box. From the top, I lifted out brightly coloured tops. Eyes sparkled as I gave them out. Then, there were the knitted bandages for the patients. Next, came a box of mixed raisins and sultanas.

As I put my hand in again, I felt the...could it really be? I grasped it, and pulled it out.

Yes, "A brand-new rubber, hot water bottle!" I cried. I had not asked God to send it; I had not truly believed that God could. Ruth was in the front row of the children.

She rushed forward, crying out, "If God has sent the bottle, He must have sent the dolly, too!"

Rummaging down to the bottom of the box, she pulled out the small, beautifully dressed doll. Her eyes shone: She had never doubted!

That parcel had been on the way for five whole months, packed up by my former Sunday School class, whose leader had heard and obeyed God's prompting in the night to send a hot water bottle, even to the equator. One of the girls had put in a doll for an African child — five months earlier - in answer to the believing prayer of a ten-year-old to bring it "That afternoon!"

Isaiah 65:24 says 'And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.'

Hope and possibility be with you. **Amen**

### **Worship Music**

O Come O Come Emmanuel:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKu0or0t8Uw&ab\\_channel=ChetValleyChurches](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKu0or0t8Uw&ab_channel=ChetValleyChurches)

On Jordan's Banks the Baptist Cries

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPAXha7VMkA&ab\\_channel=MartijndeGroot](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPAXha7VMkA&ab_channel=MartijndeGroot)

All Who Are Thirsty

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coWRDjX02pU&ab\\_channel=VineyardWorshipUK%26Ireland](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coWRDjX02pU&ab_channel=VineyardWorshipUK%26Ireland)

I Cannot Tell Why He Whom Angels Worship – Lucy Gibson (attached).

### **Prayers of Intercession**

*With confidence in the God who always hears us, and can breathe peace into our hearts, let us offer our prayers and petitions to God:*

That through this season of Advent we may grow in grace and expectancy of God, as we prepare again to greet the Christ child ...

That those who feel separated from the grace of God may find this season a time of reconciliation and peace...

We give thanks for the development of vaccines and the hope it brings.

That leaders of nations may work together to attain wellbeing from Covid and other disease, economic stability, peace and justice ...

That all who are overwhelmed, unwell and struggling in body, mind and spirit may know healing, provision, and hope enough for each day ...

We commend to your safe keeping those who have recently died, and all whom we have loved ...

Loving God, bless the prayers of our hearts as we lift them before you now .....

**We commend ourselves and the whole of creation to your unending love. In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Joining all our prayers together we say the prayer our saviour taught us:

**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 them that 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.**

### **Blessing**

God of hope, who brought love into this world,  
be the love that dwells between us.

God of hope, who brought peace into this world,  
be the peace that dwells between us.

God of hope, who brought joy into this world,  
be the joy that dwells between us.

God of hope, the rock we stand upon,  
be the centre, the focus of our lives.

*(words John Bishop Faithandworship.com)*

And the blessing of the Holy Trinity of God  
be with you and those whom you love always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**