

Third Sunday of Advent Reflection



(image holy trinity episcopal)

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: John 1:6-8,19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Reflection

We have a second Sunday reading of John the Baptist today. A figure so important in firstly the nativity story, as he in Elizabeth's womb 'leaps' in recognition of Jesus in Mary's; and secondly, as an adult in each Gospel as he calls people, calls us, to spiritually spring clean in readiness for the Holy One.

John had been called since before he was even born, to be prophetic, to be 'holy'. His simple way of life and humbleness are well recorded, no more so than when this great spiritual man of God says he is not fit even to tie the thongs on Jesus's sandals.

I wonder if at the last supper Jesus in some way calls on this as he insists on washing the disciple's feet. We have no right to be worthy, but Jesus makes us so. Baptism - physical and spiritual offers symbolic cleaning, forgiveness and renewal. The grace of God at work. God knows we need God, and never is this more apparent than at Christmas with the coming of Christ.

This is indeed something to celebrate and today, the third Sunday of advent 'joy' is also known as Gaudete Sunday. It is a day of rejoicing and for those who choose to fast during Advent, a time to relax those limitations as we are get closer to Christmas.

Alongside repentance John points us to a power of grace and forgiveness not of this world. It is a power that brings such a peace that really makes no sense; so that those who place their trust in Jesus, despite living in guilty, difficult and fearful situations can find themselves free from fear, prepared to better live out the divine calling on their lives.

Spiritual write Philip Yancey says "Grace does not depend on what we have done for God but rather what God has done for us. Ask people what they must do to get to heaven and most reply, "Be good." Jesus' stories contradict that answer. All we must do is cry, "Help!"

Humbleness, kindness, forgiveness of others (where it is safe to do so) and ourselves are 'doable' things we can live out, and there reach in our and others life is unmeasurable.

My sister recalls a Christian teacher at her primary school saying about Joy – **J**esus **O**thers **Y**ourself. None of these should be forgotten. Remember Jesus asks us not only to wash each other's feet, but to let our own metaphorical feet be washed too!

This third week of advent may you know moments free from burden and bubbles of joy, as you seek and delight in God's love and grace for you. Amen.

Worship Music

God is Working His Purpose Out - By Melharmonic Virtual Choir

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ms9Fu-O8ZHU&ab_channel=MelharmonicMusicServices

The Angel Gabriel - Kings College:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pliqObTHxUQ&ab_channel=drwestbury

The Holly and the Ivy -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57l6dSbVppM&ab_channel=mothball22

It Came upon a Midnight Clear - Norah Jones

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sq3rn4yc-3Y&ab_channel=raphaelj.

Prayers of Intercession – kindly written for us today by John Dalton

Watchful at all times,

let us pray for strength to stand with confidence,
before our maker and redeemer.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father,
you promised through your son Jesus Christ,

to hear us when we pray in faith.

We pray for the good estate of the Church;
guide and govern us by your good Spirit,
that all who profess and call themselves Christians,
may be led in the way of truth,
and hold the faith in unity of spirit,
in the bond of peace and in righteousness of life.
Prepare us for the coming of Christ,
lead and sustain us through our advent journey,
fill us with hope and the gift of glorious expectation.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

We pray that God may bring in his kingdom with justice and mercy,
that God may establish among the nations, his sceptre of righteousness.

We live in a disturbing and troubled world;

A world filled with doubt and conflict, inequality and injustice, fear and uncertainty.

In this season of waiting and preparation, we pray that the leaders of the nations
and all those in positions of power and responsibility, will find renewal in this period
of awakening, to work together to bring about peace, justice, freedom and
understanding.

We pray for the honouring of human rights, and as we in the past week celebrated
the anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, we recall our own
obligations as individuals to honour human rights, to act toward one another in a
spirit of kindness and community, without distinction of any kind, and that with your
strength we carry the courage of this obligation in our daily lives and towards the
world which nourishes and sustains us.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

Almighty and merciful God,

whose Son, Jesus Christ, understood people's fear and pain,

have mercy on those in need,

for the hungry and the homeless,

for those in refugee camps, hospitals, hospices and care homes,

for those cared for in their own homes.

We pray that God may bind up the broken-hearted, restore the sick,
and raise up all who have fallen.

We lift to you all whom we pray for.

In silence let us bring our own prayers before God.

We pray for all who bring comfort, care and healing, for those who work selflessly
and tirelessly to support the needs of others.

At this time we pray in particular for those organisations and individuals who
minister to those who are homeless this Christmas, who have no food to eat, or
clothes to protect them against the winter weather.

Inspire generosity, goodness and compassion in all our hearts that we may act in faith and out of goodwill to restore decency and dignity to those marginalised in our society.

We pray for all those in the medical profession and those that support them, for scientists and all those who are working to combat the global pandemic, restoring health, well-being and stability to our society, here and across the world.

Let this spirit of community not be forgotten, but cherished and nurtured and used for the good of all civilisations.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

We recall on this day the life of St Lucy of Syracuse, Patron Saint of the blind, whose name means light, martyred in 303 for her unflinching devotion to Christ.

We pray that the light which is Christ your son, whose coming is the sign for rejoicing at this time, shines as brightly within us as it did within St Lucy, as it did within Mary and Joseph as they set out into the unknown, in obedience and faithfulness, and to all those who through the ages in times of darkness and the shadow of death have been drawn to your light.

Let us not in our own age fail you.

Pray, that with all the saints in light,
we may shine forth as lights for the world.

And let us commend the world, which Christ will judge,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father

Accept these prayers for the sake of your son our saviour Jesus 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 *(words John Bishop Faithandworship.com)*

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.

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.**