

7th December 2025 – Morning Service

Advent 2

Jill Martin

Advent Candle Liturgy

For unto us a child was born, for this world... Jesus, who is Prince of Peace. Peace was proclaimed, wholeness and restoration were promised. Jesus, Prince of Peace, meet us this day, for we wait on you. Fill us with your peace. *The second advent candle is lit.*

All pray: **Jesus, Prince of Peace, with your peace, transform this world.**

Introduction

This is Advent, the season of expectation. In homes throughout the land, Christmas cards have arrived and stand displayed on mantelpieces and windowsills. Festive trees are adorned with tinsel and baubles, and children wonder what gifts will lie beneath them this year. Two thousand years ago a people waited expectantly as they listened to a prophet called John talk of one who was to come, the Promised One of God, and they began to prepare themselves for that moment.

StF 706 – Longing for light

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| 1) Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
Light for the world to see. | 3) Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
Shared until all are fed. |
| Ch) <i>Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.</i> | 4) Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
Walls made of living stone. |
| 2) Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice. | 5) Many the gifts, many the people,
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
Making your kingdom come. |

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Prayers of Adoration

Father God, your servant John the Baptist came with a challenging message; calling for repentance and lives to be transformed. Those who heard were filled with expectation, waiting for Messiah, and yet ultimately failing to notice his arrival in that humble stable. This Advent season, may we be filled with expectation, as we celebrate the greatest gift of all; your Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

You are the One, the Holy One, who looks on all you have made, with love. You gaze at me, and your faithful kindness overwhelms me. I fall silent before you, my words stalling, as my heart breaks open and pours out my thanks, my delight in you. The more I gaze back at you, the more I see through your eyes; I am born again in your devotion to your creation. Let my words fall before you, but grant me the words and the acts of love you long for me to have for your world. **Amen.**

Kerry Tankard, District Chair, Yorkshire West District

Prayer of Confession

You have given us a world of beauty, and we have spoilt it. A world to feed us, and so many go hungry. A world of riches, and we are unwilling to share. A world to care for, and we think only of ourselves. Forgive us, gracious God, for those times your heart is saddened by our selfishness. For those times we have no

thought for others, no cares but ours. Enable us to see this world anew as a gift from you, to be shared and nurtured, and those who live upon it to be loved and cared for. We ask this that your name may be glorified, through the beauty of this world, and the service of our lives **Amen**.

StF 178 – Long ago prophets knew

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| 1) Long ago, prophets knew
Christ would come, born a Jew,
Come to make all things new;
Bear his People's burden,
Freely love and pardon: | 3) Mary, hail! Though afraid,
She believed, she obeyed.
In her womb, God is laid;
Till the time expected,
Nurtured and protected: |
| Ch) <i>Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!</i>
<i>Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!</i>
<i>When he comes, When he comes,</i>
<i>Who will make him welcome?</i> | 4) Journey ends! Where afar
Bethlem shines, like a star,
Stable door stands ajar.
Unborn Son of Mary, Saviour, do not tarry! |
| 2) God in time, God in man,
This is God's timeless plan:
He will come, as a man,
Born himself of woman, God divinely human: | Ch) <i>Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!</i>
<i>Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!</i>
<i>Jesus comes! Jesus comes!</i>
<i>We will make him welcome!</i> |

Fred Pratt Green © 1971 Stainer & Bell Ltd

Reading: Isaiah 11: 1-10 (NIV)

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.

Reflection

In the beginning of the book of Isaiah, God speaks to his chosen people as a loving parent. His people have forgotten everything he has done for them and turned away from his love for them. He reveals his hurt and disappointment and how they will be punished for their choices. God is saddened that they have become greedy and selfish towards one another, taking advantage of the vulnerable and celebrating their own success. They consider they live by the rules of God through the law given by Moses. They are fooling themselves but not all-seeing God.

Whilst there is to be punishment, there is always hope. God will never totally cut himself off from his children; there is too much love invested in them and that will never be removed. From the stump of Jesse, there will be a new King. Jesse, the father of David, Israel's greatest king – his line will continue. Matthew

follows this line at the at the beginning of his Gospel, establishing Jesus born of the line of Jesse, God's promise of the future.

Isaiah tells of the changes which will happen to his people, how violence will be overcome by peace and harmony. The natural order will be overturned and suddenly the world will change. God will send the Messiah, the Prince of Peace.

StF 175 – Light of the world

1) Light of the world, You stepped down
into darkness,
Opened my eyes, let me see.
Beauty that made this heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You.

2) King of all days, oh so highly exalted,
Glorious in heaven above,
Humbly You came to the earth You created,
All for love's sake became poor.

Ch) *So here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You're my God:
You're altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me.*

Br) *And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross.
And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross.*

Tim Hughes © 2000 Thankyou Music

Reading: Matthew 3: 1-12 (NIV)

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"

John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptising, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

"I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Reflection

John the Baptist features in the Gospels as a key player. His mother Elizabeth was well past childbearing age, very much like Sarah, wife of Abraham and mother of Isaac. Elizabeth was married to Zechariah, a priest. The fact that they had no children was a great shame for the couple. Whilst in the Temple, Zechariah was visited by Angel Gabriel who told him he was to become a father. Zechariah questioned this and was immediately struck dumb. When he returned to his wife, he found he was wrong; Elizabeth was indeed expecting a child.

Some months later, Elizabeth celebrated with her cousin, Mary, and acknowledged that Mary was carrying the Messiah. Elizabeth's child leapt inside her as the two women met. Two miraculous conceptions. Elizabeth gave birth to a son and, following instructions, named him John as Zechariah regained his power of speech. We are not told about John's childhood in any detail. It has been suggested that Elizabeth and Zechariah didn't bring him up to adulthood as elderly parents.

We are told of John as an adult, a prophet, a voice speaking in the wilderness calling people to repent. From the Gospel stories, we know he lived very humbly, wearing goat skin and surviving on wild honey, food to be found in the wilderness. We know that he lived far from Jerusalem, the home of God, far from the Temple. His was the voice which carried to the Holy places of cities, the Temple and Synagogues. His is the voice which angered the rich and powerful and put him at risk. But he kept speaking, against the common belief and understanding. A prophet of God speaking God's words. 'Repent.'

And the people came! They moved away from the Temple and went to the River Jordan, where John baptised. They turned their backs on tradition, and trusted that John was speaking to them as God's voice on earth. He was telling them that after all the years of waiting and hearing the words of the prophets, the Messiah was here! In John's lifetime, John's relative. The Son of God.

And today as we move through this season of Advent, we are called to repent, put aside all the things which clutter up our lives. Reflect on what God calls us to do and how to answer his call. To love one another as He loves us. To trust in Him and patiently wait until the time of Jesus' return when the world will change and all will live in peace. The time is coming. Amen.

StF 182 – On Jordan's bank

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| 1) On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh.
Awake and harken, for he brings
glad tidings from the King of kings! | 4) To heal the sick stretch out your hand
and bid the fallen sinner stand.
Shine forth and let your light restore
earth's own true loveliness once more. |
| 2) Then cleansed be every life from sin:
make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there. | 5) To god the Son all glory be
whose advent sets his people free.
whom with the Father we adore,
and Holy Spirit, evermore. |
| 3) For you are our salvation Lord,
our refuge and our great reward.
Without your grace we waste away
like flowers that wither and decay. | |

John Chandler

Offertory Prayer

As we present our offerings today, we are reminded of your great love for us. Your love knows no bounds and is beyond measure. Help us to reflect your love in all that we do, including our giving. May these gifts be used to spread your love to others, bringing hope and healing to a world in need. **Amen.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever." (1 Chronicles 16: 34)

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. (James 1: 17-18)

Holy Father, thank you for your love that endures forever. In your Spirit, we give thanks every day. But, this one day each year, we gather to celebrate your goodness, your gifts, and your provision. We pause to praise you that every good and perfect gift comes from you, that we have so much for which we are thankful. Above all, thank you for your gift of salvation through your Son Jesus Christ, from whom we receive forgiveness of our sins and life everlasting. In Jesus' holy name. **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession based on the Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Loving God, the Father of us all we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ, for the Church which is your family on earth today and which has its squabbles like all earthly families. We pray especially for the part of your family which meets here in the Vale of Stour Circuit bringing to you our particular joys and needs. Your kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Heavenly King, whose power is exercised with love, we pray that all in positions of power in our world and in our church may use it seeking both to know and do your will and to know and serve the needs of others. Your kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Loving Father, the giver of all good things, we thank you for all that feeds us in body, mind and spirit, and we pray for those who are hungry today: those without enough to eat, those without company or love, those without peace or a purpose in life. Your kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Compassionate God, the help of all in need, we pray for those who are facing a hard task or decision, for those who are going through a difficult time because of illness, worry, or grief. We pray for ourselves, for those we know, and for those whose needs are known only by you. Your kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.

Eternal God, whose kingdom stretches beyond the limits of our sight and beyond the bounds of death, we think with love of those who were close to us and are now with you in heaven and share in your glory. Your kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son our saviour Jesus Christ. **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.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 185 – Sing we the King

- 1) Sing we the King who is coming to reign;
Glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain!
Life and salvation his empire shall bring,
Joy to the nations when Jesus is King:
- Ch) *Come let us sing: Praise to our King,
Jesus our King, Jesus our King:
This is our song, who to Jesus belong:
Glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.*
- 2) All shall be well in his kingdom of peace;
Freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase;
Justice and truth from his sceptre shall spring;
Wrong shall be ended when Jesus is King:
- 3) Souls shall be saved from the burden of sin;
Doubt shall not darken his witness within;
Hell has no terrors, and death has no sting;
Love is victorious when Jesus is King:
- 4) Kingdom of Christ, for your coming we pray;
Hasten, O Father, the dawn of the day
When this new song your creation shall sing:
Satan is vanquished, and Jesus is King:

Charles Silvester Horne

Blessing

In all your Advent preparations, remain watchful with your eyes on Christ, whose birth in a manger is but a promise of his coming again in glory. And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and forever. **Amen.**