

Our Sunday Service Together

Advent 2, December 10th 2023



An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia, alleluia!

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

God the Father forgives us in Christ and heals us by the Holy Spirit. Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness, all slander and malice, and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord.

Amen.

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 85.1-2 and 8-13 *We say the psalm aloud*

Lord, you were gracious to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the offence of your people and covered all their sins.

I will listen to what the Lord God will say, for he shall speak peace to his people and to the faithful, that they turn not again to folly.

Truly, his salvation is near to those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other;

Truth shall spring up from the earth and righteousness look down from heaven.

The Lord will indeed give all that is good, and our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness shall go before him and direct his steps in the way.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Scripture Reading 1 Peter 3.8-15a

Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For

'Those who desire life and desire to see good days,
let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit;

¹¹ let them turn away from evil and do good; let them seek peace and pursue it.

¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'

¹³ Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, ¹⁵ but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

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

² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; ³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

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

⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ 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. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ 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. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

The baptism we read about today, a baptism with confession, was nothing new for the Jews. Ritual washing, alongside confession was a regular and normal practice – we all need to say sorry. But here was something different with John!

In the first instance this is more than confession this is a call for repentance. Anyone can confess their sins, take part in a ritual act, be it washing in sacred water or saying three pages of hail Mary, or doing community service. But repentance is a different matter!

Repentance is about a change of heart and mind leading to a new praxis. Repentance takes looking at ourselves in the eye, seeing our heart and mind on matters and being open to being changed by God. Confession and outward symbolism through ritual washing is something anyone can do. Repentance takes a desire to become different and to achieve it requires the presence and power of the Holy Spirit at work within our hearts, minds and souls.

John clearly has a ministry of providing the ability for confession and ritual washing – this is why he is John the Baptizer. But he has another ministry, that of proclaiming the need for a different road to God, that of repentance leading to a redeemed, transformed life. This is not an overnight matter, it takes years and years of looking again and again in the mirror and saying 'God, I need to be changed, come and change me'.

But John has another ministry as a prophet of God. John dresses the part; like Elijah he wears camel hair clothes. He lives the life, dwelling in the wilderness and living frugally.

Prophecy has been a scarce commodity in Israel for 300 years, we are told the word of God has been silent. But now in John the word of God is come again. It comes calling the people to a change of heart and lifestyle. It comes also pointing to how God would fulfil this work, through one to follow, one greater than he, one who offer both confession and repentance, water and Holy Spirit in baptism.

And this is Good News! Good News about Jesus Christ who offers both confession and repentance. Who would bring the power and presence of the Holy Spirit through whom the power to be changed comes to us. Here is the straight road, here is the filled in valley and levelled mountain!

The voice cries out, 'come and be baptised in water and spirit'. Yes, make confession each day, but take the time for a good look in the mirror and acknowledge there is more to be done, more transformation possible by the Holy Spirit – as St Paul says, each day to be transformed 'from one degree of glory into another'.

The people who had come to John at the Jordan, put the effort and time necessary to do so, to be able to confess and ritually cleaned. So too, we who would come to Christ, have to take the effort and the time – a life

time even, and make confession to ourselves and to God of our need to be changed, and then receive the Spirit each day for repentance to take effect, to be transformed in heart, mind, soul and way of life.

Will we, can we?

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; help us, as we come into your presence, to be still and know that you are God.

As we continue to journey through Advent let us open our hearts and minds to receive anew the gift of Jesus into our lives. Let us give thanks that in baptism we started our journey of faith and ask that it may be refreshed and renewed as we prepare for Christmas.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Strengthen our bishops and those who seek to serve you in this diocese. May they be filled with the Spirit and serve you as the first disciples.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

We Pray for the King, Prime Minister, and all World leaders, that they may have the Spirit of wisdom to lead us through this difficult time. May they always use their power for the good of the people and avoid the temptation to personal gain.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for the hungry and starving, that the available food may be used for the benefit of all.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for our families, friends, and neighbours that we may serve Christ in one another and seek the common good.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for the sick, suffering and dying and we give thanks and pray for those who use their skill to care for them.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Hear us as we remember those who have died..... According to your promises grant them a share in your eternal kingdom.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer. Amen.

The Collect

All: O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us,
and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: 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.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me;
Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.