

## **At Home Service - 2nd Sunday in Advent - 5 Dec 2021 - prepared by Graham Shillabeer**

My greetings to all the readers , far and wide, of this shared act of advent worship.

December is now upon us and the time of preparation is truly with us. But, we must pause and think, and bring to mind the purposes of God being fulfilled in this our generation. Allow yourself this unhurried time in the presence of God, so that his blessing might rest upon us all and the Holy Spirit enlighten our hearts and minds.

### **Call to worship**

Malachi chapter 3 vs 1 *'I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me'*  
(Who might that be?)

### **Hymn (words by Mark Earey) - Singing the Faith no 165 - (just three verses for today)**

Verse 1

**Advent candles tell their story** as we watch and pray,  
longing for the Day of Glory, 'Come, Lord, soon,' we say.  
Pain and sorrow, tears and sadness changed for gladness on that Day.

Verse 2

Prophet voices loudly crying, making pathways clear;  
glimpsing glory, self-denying, calling all to hear.  
Through their message - challenged, shaken – hearts awaken: God is near!

Verse 3

John the Baptist, by his preaching and by water poured,  
brought to those who heard his teaching news of hope restored:  
'Keep your vision strong and steady, and be ready for the Lord.'

### **1st Prayer**

Lord God, yours is the imagination which conceived the whole universe, yours the power which brings all things into being, yours the truth which guides all life to its fulfilment in you. We praise and adore you, author and finisher of all that is.

We praise you for your Word, underlying all that exists, giving meaning to all things that you have made, shown to us in the story of your people, made clear in Jesus Christ our Lord.

We praise you for all that bears witness to him, the Word made flesh, Saviour of all humanity, Light of the World.

And today we would dare to ask that we might be added to those that bear witness, that in this generation there will be proclamation and testimony and good news shared.

Grant us Lord your inspiration in these moments of worship, wherever we may be.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen

### **Speak The Lord's Prayer**

**Reading**      **Luke chapter 3 vs 1-8.** (read from your own bible)

*which includes these words (quoted from the book of Isaiah Ch 40 - vs 3-5)*

*A voice of one calling:  
"In the wilderness prepare  
the way for the Lord;  
make straight in the desert  
a highway for our God.*

*Every valley shall be raised up,  
every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level,  
the rugged places a plain.*

*And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,  
and all people will see it together.  
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”*

### **Hymn - Singing the Faith 182**

(Words by John Chandler)

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

Then cleansed by 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.

For you are our salvation, Lord, our refuge, and our great reward;  
Without your grace we waste away like flowers that wither and decay.

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.

To God the Son all glory be whose advent sets his people free,  
Whom, with the Father, we adore, and Holy Spirit evermore.

### **Reflection**

Last week in the At Home service we were appropriately reminded that the Advent season is a time of preparation, with thoughts directed to Christ's second coming as well as the celebration of His birth at Christmas.

By tradition the second Sunday in Advent reminds us of John the Baptist, a relative of Jesus. Called by God to be the one who would have the awesome privilege of announcing the imminent coming of the Messiah, just before Jesus began his amazing ministry. (Not a bad claim to fame for John!). Let us not overlook either that John's own birth was a miracle too. Zechariah and Elizabeth got a big surprise.

'Messenger' is the word used in the book of Malachi, announcing that God is sending one. Now is very much the time of year for messages for all of us. You and I will, I hope, be sending and receiving messages of seasonal greetings, of catching up with family and friends, news of ups and downs in these turbulent times, words of encouragement and prayer support when others know of the challenges that we have in our personal situations. It is good to share messages.

We are called to witness to. We have a message to proclaim. Watch out though for the message that God has for each you. The prophet Isaiah used the phrase 'A voice of one calling'. It still happens and you should know that you and I, if willing, can fulfil a very individual role in God's great purposes, however amazing that may seem.

John the Baptist was someone who had his own very specific mission to fulfil in his generation. A short period in mankind's history when his contribution was a vital piece of the jigsaw (which we might call 'the eternal purposes of God'). He was up to the calling. Remember that it is but God alone who sees 'the full picture' which is being pieced together according to God's perfect timing.

'Prepare ye the way of the Lord' & 'Make straight in the desert a highway for our God', are both scriptures that clearly set the scene.

John the Baptist could be described in a number of ways I suggest. Messenger, for sure, but also Pioneer. Scout. Trailblazer. Front man. Announcer. Highwayman even? Maybe not - the description 'Highwayman' in our folklore suggests 'taking' from people. So that is not it. We have much to give (of God).

My description for you today is 'Trailblazer'. I looked it up in my dictionary and liked the definition I found - 'a person who marks a new track through wild country'. That sounds pretty apt to me as a methodology for our Churches outreach in a very needy world, with many hurting and uncertain people. Hope is right there in the mentioned scriptures - *'the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed'*.

In such a role we are not alone, for Christ is all around us. The power of God in doing his work is assured and the Holy Spirit goes before. Stay strong all of you. Be encouraged. Listen for God calling and be assured that not every assignment involves eating locusts and wild honey!

(Re-read verse 3 of the hymn at the top of this service)

### **2nd prayer** (taken from the Methodist Prayer Handbook)

Lord we come to you when our hearts are filled with worries and when our burdens are heavy. You give us strength no worldly creation could match. You give us joy that reaches far down into our soul. You give us a place where we are not rejected: where your Spirit brings new life and pure wisdom; where we feel included, safe and loved. Help us to bring your inclusiveness into the world and to let all know about your goodness and love. Amen.

### **Hymn - Singing the Faith No 181**

Verse 1

**Of the Father's love begotten**, ere the worlds began to be,  
He is alpha and omega. He the source, the ending he,  
Of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see,  
Evermore and evermore.

Verse 2

By his word was all created; he commanded, it was done;  
Earth and sky and boundless ocean, universe of three in one;  
All that sees the moon's soft radiance, all that breathes beneath the sun,  
Evermore and evermore.

Verse 3

This is he whom seers in old time chanted of with one accord,  
Whom the voices of the prophets promised in their faithful word;  
Now he shines, the long expected; let creation praise its Lord,  
Evermore and evermore.

Verse 4

O you heights of heaven, adore him; angel hosts, his praises sing;  
All dominions, bow before him, and extol our God and King;  
Let no tongue on earth be silent, every voice in concert sing,  
Evermore and evermore.

### **Blessing**

Lord God take our minds, and fill them with the knowledge of your whole truth. Take our imaginations, so that we may be inspired again and again by the fresh visions of your purpose and glory.

.... and to this end may God's peace, power and love abide with us all, now and always. Amen.