



## AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2024

compiled by Rev Chris Jackson

### Preparation

If you have a candle, please feel free to light it and spend some time in silence watching and waiting with anticipation the call of Jesus upon your life.

### Call to Worship

We come to praise you, Lord, God of all the nations.  
We come to you who set your people free.  
We come to you who guides us into the way of peace.  
We come to you as we journey through Advent  
and prepare to welcome, once again, the Christ child. **Amen**

### HYMN - StF 180

1] O come, O come, Immanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice, rejoice! Immanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

2] O come, O come, Thou Lord of might  
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height  
In ancient times didst give the law  
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.

3] O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save  
And give them victory o'er the grave.

4] O come, Thou Key of David, come  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.

5] O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight

*Latin 18<sup>th</sup> century  
translated by John Mason Neale (1811-1866)*

### **PRAYER**

Bright, shining God, who shimmers in the darkness of winter,  
We approach you today with your light in our hearts.  
We wait for you, we watch for you,  
just as the watchmen await the first signs of morning.  
Walk with us throughout Advent,  
and light our feet as we walk perhaps a little unsteadily  
towards the birth of the 'light of the world'.

Enter into the radiance of God's presence.  
On this second Advent Sunday  
let us bring all our hopes and expectations  
before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
on whom all hope is founded and on whom we wait. **AMEN**

LET US JOIN IN THE LORD'S PRAYER TOGETHER

**READING** Luke 3:1-6 (NRSV) *The Proclamation of John the Baptist*

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth,  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' "

**Hymn - Stf 177**

1] Lo, He comes with clouds descending,  
Once for favoured sinners slain;  
Thousand thousand saints attending  
Swell the triumph of His train:  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!  
God appears on earth to reign.

2] Every eye shall now behold Him  
Robed in glorious majesty;  
Those who set at naught and sold Him,  
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,  
Deeply wailing, Deeply wailing, Deeply wailing,  
Shall the true Messiah see.

3] Those dear tokens of His passion  
Still His dazzling body bears;  
Cause of endless exultation  
To His ransomed worshippers:  
With what rapture, With what rapture,  
With what rapture,  
Gaze we on those glorious scars.

4] Yea, Amen, let all adore Thee,  
High on Thine eternal throne;  
Saviour, take the power and glory,  
Claim the kingdom for Thine own:  
Come, Lord Jesus! Come, Lord Jesus!  
Come, Lord Jesus!  
Everlasting God, come down!

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

## **Reflection**

If I say Bushtucker trial you'll probably all be transported to the jungle where a group of celebrities are tucking into a meal consisting of some very unappealing insects. Eat the insects and win rewards for the team...maybe a hot meal or some other home comfort...however, fail in the task and things are not so good.

I think John the Baptist would have been a great star on the show...he ate locusts and wild honey as a chosen lifestyle !!! Dressed in camel hair clothes...scratchy...he would have seemed an odd character...

A voice crying in the wilderness. Preparing the way for someone else. Preparing the way for God's message to humankind. Preparing the way for the coming of Jesus the Messiah.

Gospel means good news, but not just any good news, but news that heralds something important, something new, something that would change things. They carry weight, importance, you know what comes next is to be listened to and taken on board...

The passage that Luke is quoting from the Old Testament is found in Isaiah 40:3-5. It would have been well known to the original listeners and its importance would not have been lost. In fact a few eyebrows may have been raised. Something big was about to happen.

But what?

I suppose that is the thing about the unknown, it is a bit like a teaser trailer for some big upcoming event or film. You get a taster to whet your appetite. A call to preparation for what happens next.

The only problem with this is that if we are not careful, we only see Advent as something to pass over as quick as possible on the way to Christmas day. And yet it is a beautiful season of reflection and focus on the coming Messiah. The imagery of light is used for a reason at Advent, it is used as a symbol of showing us the way, pointing us in the right direction.

The Christian life is one of continued transformation into Christlikeness. To be like the one to whom our worship is given. In order to do this we need to intentionally allow the spirit of God to work within us, to show Christ's light into the deep recesses of our soul, and to redeem and change them to all that is good.

Now that is the Good News that John was talking about when he proclaimed, "prepare the way of the Lord" ...the Way of Jesus is the life to which we aspire as Jesus' disciples and Advent is an opportunity to focus on that Way. AMEN

## **Prayers**

Holy God, as we continue our journey through Advent,  
our minds and hearts, hopes and visions  
turn towards our journey to Christmas and all its promise,  
yet we feel overwhelmed and helpless  
as we see and hear and feel the pain of the war in the Middle East.  
We pray for families there and all who are bereaved,  
earful, homeless, hungry and stateless.

Holy God, we pray too for those in Ukraine and Russia who are suffering because of the ongoing war. Most want to live in peace and harmony with each other but the violence prevents them from living the life they would wish.

Holy God, all around the world there seems to be pain and anguish created by political tactics and desires, while people simply seek peace and calm, home and shelter, food and water.

Holy God, as we unearth our Christmas treasures in our decorations box,  
we think of those who have nothing to unearth, no happy memories, nothing to pass on.  
May they find someone and something that gives this Advent a meaning  
and a memory worth passing on to the next generation.

Holy God, as we prepare for Christmas, we think of those who will be spending their first Christmas without  
a treasured loved one; for those who will be stepping into Advent with sadness, loneliness and uncertainty.

Holy God, bless all we have prayed for,  
all we have brought to mind  
and bless us too we pray. AMEN

### **HYMN - StF 264**

1] Make way, make way, for Christ the King  
In splendour arrives.  
Fling wide the gates and welcome Him  
Into your lives.

*Make way! (Make way!)*  
*Make way! (Make way!)*  
*For the King of kings.*  
*(For the King of kings.)*  
*Make way! (Make way!)*  
*Make way! (Make way!)*  
*And let His kingdom in.*

2] He comes the broken hearts to heal,  
The prisoners to free.  
The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance,  
The blind shall see.

### **Blessing**

Lord, may we go out in hope and love.  
Through our actions and words,  
Let us become embodied Advent candles  
Burning with the love and light of Jesus  
In our homes, towns and villages. Amen

3] And those who mourn with heavy  
hearts,  
Who weep and sigh;  
With laughter, joy and royal crown  
He'll beautify.

4] We call you now to worship Him  
As Lord of all.  
To have no gods before Him,  
Their thrones must fall!

*Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)*