

WORSHIP 12\12\21 ADVENT 3

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Good morning St John's and welcome to our service this morning, which is the 3rd Sunday in Advent. In this service we remember John the Baptist and his role in preparing people for the coming of Jesus.

PRAYER FOR TODAY -THE COLLECT

God for whom we watch and wait,
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son:
give us courage to speak the truth,
to hunger for justice,
and to suffer for the cause of right,
with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HYMN: IN CHRIST ALONE

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone, who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
'Til on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day!
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man

Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Keith Getty & Stuart Townend

Available to listen to on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16KYvflc2bE>

LIGHTING ADVENT CANDLE

ADVENT 3- John the Baptist
Lord Jesus, light of the world,
John told the people to prepare,
for you were very near.
As Christmas grows closer day by day,
help us to be ready to welcome you now.
Amen.

READINGS -JACKIE COLLINS

PSALM 146: 5-10 NIV

Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God.

He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—he remains faithful forever.

He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous.

The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

The Lord reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord.

LUKE 3:7-18 NIV

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For 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."

"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

REFLECTION

In today's Gospel we have the fiery figure of John the Baptist, cousin of Jesus, and wild man of the desert. Think Bear Grills with God and no camera crew!!!

He certainly was a man unafraid to speak the truth, so much so many people did not like him for that. Especially Herodias, wife of Herod Antipas, because John was going around condemning her marriage to Herod. For this John was beheaded but that is another story.

And so today we read of John in the desert, giving his own Jewish people a hard time. Calling them a "brood of vipers" does not seem the kindest way to get people on your side and to listen to you! Well, it did get a response from the crowd so it obviously worked!!!

However, I digress, the question is, why was John calling the crowd, "a brood of vipers"?

The clues are in our reading, for John says, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'

In other words, it is not enough simply to think that just because you are a pure-blooded descendant of Abraham that is enough to atone for any wrong doing. What you do matters as well. How you behave towards the poor, as in "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

In addition, John calls on those with power not to abuse their position. They were not to abuse their power by exerting extra payments from people dependent on them.

I guess John is calling for a radical re-think, a wake-up call about what it means to be a people of God. Not just belonging to a religious group but love in action, addressing issues of social injustice and corruption.

John also knows we humans need help to become the people God wants us to be, and that help is coming in the form of a saviour and the giving of the Holy Spirit.

He is of course talking about the coming of Jesus the Christ, the Messiah.

Notice John says how people will be baptized not with water but with the Holy Spirit and fire, when the Messiah comes.

And friends do we not all need this cleansing fire to burn away our human dross and the power of the Holy Spirit to come and empower us to be the people God wants us to be?

God still wants us to speak out against injustice, to fight against poverty, to let people know that they are precious to God and loved, cared for, welcomed, protected and valued.

We are told by Isaiah that when we behave in this way, something powerful happens. "And if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness and your night will become as noonday". (Isaiah 58:10).

I want to tell you a story from a book called "A life of Miracles", by Bill Johnson.

It is about how a young couple in a church went about their wedding.

First of all, instead of preparing a list of wedding gifts for themselves, they asked for warm hats, socks, sleeping bags, coats, to be given to their wedding guests.

Buses were sent out from the church to find the needy, the poor, the hungry and the homeless. These were to be the honoured wedding guests.

Following the wedding ceremony the newly married couple went straight to the reception hall, got behind the serving table and dished out the food to their guests. The hungry became satisfied, God was pleased.

Then something miraculous happened, someone called out for healing and healings began to happen.

Apparently, the story goes, this church had crossed some kind of threshold and a ministry of healing in the power of the Holy Spirit was born.

Let us be inspired by this story, let us seek the empowering of the Holy Spirit to be the people of God we are meant to be in Kingston Park.

We need the strength and power of the Holy Spirit, the very breath and power of God to change everything, to have our eyes opened to where we can do our tiny bit against injustice, social deprivation, the plight of refugees, the homeless, the hungry in our own community.

We cannot do everything, but if we ask and seek the Holy Spirit will empower us and show us the bit of the bigger picture we can do.

So, this Advent season when we think about the coming of Jesus let us remember this is not just a remembering of His birth thousands of years ago, but is a call for Jesus and the Holy Spirit to come again to each one of us, to empower us to be the people of God in this place of Kingston Park.

Let us sit and listen to the Hymn and make it our prayer "Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on me,

Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on me.

Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me. Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on me. Amen.

HYM: SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD

Spirit of the Living God

Spirit of the living God

Fall afresh on me

Spirit of the living God

Fall afresh on me

Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me,

Spirit of the living God

Fall afresh on me

Daniel Iverson

Available to listen to on YouTube here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WkJSLLOHdc>

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION NINA

The response for our prayers is 'Come, Lord Jesus'

Watchful at all times, let us pray for strength to stand with confidence before our Maker and Redeemer.

Come, Lord Jesus

Heavenly Father, we pray for your Church, here in Kingston Park and in the world. We pray for all the events planned for this Christmas season. We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith, that they may know the joy of your presence, be given courage to speak and wisdom to know when to remain silent. Lord of the Church, may we who confess your name be filled with the power of your Spirit that we may boldly witness for you. Watchful at all times, let us pray for strength to stand with confidence before our Maker and Redeemer.

Come, Lord Jesus

Heavenly Father, we pray for your world and for those in authority that they may rule with compassion and integrity. We remember before you those areas of the world where there is conflict and those areas that suffer from natural disasters. We remember all those who are imprisoned for speaking out against injustice. We pray for refugees and for all homeless persons. We remember those who work in degrading and difficult circumstances. We remember those who are discriminated against. Saviour of the world, be present in all places of suffering, violence and pain, and bring hope even in the darkest night. Watchful at all times, let us pray for strength to stand with confidence before our Maker and Redeemer.

Come, Lord Jesus

Heavenly Father, we pray for all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit and for all who seek to bring them comfort and healing. We pray for doctors and nurses, for all who work in our hospitals and in the community and for those who develop vaccines and treatments. We pray for those throughout the world who do not have access to medical care. We pray for all who we know who are sick at this time or in any kind of trouble or distress. (Silence)

Great Physician, stretch out your hand to bring comfort, wholeness and peace to all who suffer in any way and to those who mourn. Let us commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the mercy and protection of God. Watchful at all times, let us pray for strength to stand with confidence before our Maker and Redeemer.

Come, Lord Jesus

HYMN: ON THAT DAY THERE WILL BE NO JUSTICE

On That Day

On that day there will be no injustice.
On that day there will be no more poor.
So today I will love, I will live, I will work,
I will join in to see Your kingdom come.

On that day, there will be no more sickness.
On that day, there will be no more death.
So today I will love, I will live, I will work,
I will join in to see Your kingdom come.

Jesus, thank You for the price You paid
To bring Your heaven to today.
At great cost You brought Your world into our world;
We live to know Your presence now,
To see Your kingdom come.

On that day, there'll be no hesitation.
On that day, everyone will worship You.
So today I will love, I will live, I will work,
I will join in to see Your kingdom come.

Jesus, thank You for the price
You paid to bring Your heaven today
At great cost You brought Your world into our world:
We live to know Your presence now,
To see Your kingdom come.
To know Your presence now, to see Your kingdom come.
To know Your presence now, to see Your kingdom come.

Geraldine Latty

BLESSING

May God Bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you and give you His peace. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

In Christ Alone by Keith Getty & Stuart Townend, copyright © 2001 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd).

Spirit of the Living God by Daniel Iverson, copyright ©1935, renewed 1963, Birdwing Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing).

On That Day by Geraldine Latty, copyright © 2007 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd).

Lyrics reproduced under CCLI licence no. 5347.