



**The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
Sunday 13 December 2020
The Third Sunday of Advent**

Preparation

We meet in the name of God:

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Praise God! For the Lord our God the almighty reigns!

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him the glory.

God in Christ has revealed his glory.

Come let us worship!

Silence is kept

The Lord is here

His Spirit is with us.

The Greeting

The Lighting of the Third Advent Candle

People of God: return!

You are called to be God's own.

From the mountains announce the good news.

God comes in justice and peace,

to all who follow his ways.

You are God's children.

Lord, make us one in the peace of Christ

today and for ever. Amen.



Response

Lift up your heads, O gates:
Be lifted up, you everlasting doors:
And the King of glory shall come in.

“Who is the King of glory?”

**“The Lord, strong and mighty,
The Lord who is mighty in battle.”**

Lift up your heads, O gates:
Be lifted up, you everlasting doors:
And the King of glory shall come in.

“Who is this King of glory?”

**“The Lord of hosts,
He is the King of glory.”**

Prayers of Penitence

Christ the light of the world has come to dispel
the darkness of our hearts.
In his light, let us examine ourselves and confess our sins.

Confession

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:
**Lord our God
In our sin we have avoided your call.
Our love for you is like the morning cloud,
Like the dew that goes away early.
Have mercy on us;
Deliver us from judgement;
Bind up our wounds and revive us;
In Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

The almighty and merciful Lord
Grant us pardon and forgiveness of all our sins,
Time for amendment of life,
And the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

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.**

The Readings

The First Reading: Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-end

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion - to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.
For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring
up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His word

The Second Reading: **John 1:6-8, 19-28**

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said,

'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
"Make straight the way of the Lord"',
as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His Word.

Reflection from Janice

I was driving along (without the radio on) when suddenly the Band Aid 1984 hit "Do they know it's Christmas?" popped into my head. You could say that isn't unusual given that we're now surrounded by Christmas music but I had also been seeking divine inspiration for this reflection!

You will probably recall that Band Aid was the brain child of Bob Geldof and raised millions of pounds for anti-famine efforts in Ethiopia. It was instrumental in bringing light and hope to the thousands of people caught up in that disaster.

Our Gospel reading today sets the scene for Christ's ministry here on earth. You could say that John the Baptist was the light that would lead people to Christ, light of the world, through love, not by force. John was under no illusion that he was in a position of power; the job of untying sandals was usually done by

slaves, people whose lives were not their own and were pretty much bottom of the pile. To say that he wasn't even worthy to do that job was truly radical. John's example is a powerful one for all Christians to follow and it's been said that he was preparing the way, not for God's people to return to the Promised Land, but for God to come to us.

Just like John prepared people for the coming of the Messiah, so we are to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ in our lives. We are called to witness to Christ by word and deed, in good times and bad and whether it suits us or not.

And we need to remind ourselves that we betray our Christian calling whenever we forget our servant role, whenever the institution becomes more important, whenever we cling to status and office, whenever we become just like everyone else in society and whenever we blend in. Instead, we need to remember John the Baptist, we need to be the light that points others to the real true light of Jesus himself, and to care for the less fortunate in society

When we have Christ in our lives we no longer have to be afraid but we have to recognise our need for him and confess our need of his grace and love. Only then will we truly experience him as the Lord and Saviour of our lives.

This year has seen challenges on a monumental scale not experienced by several generations but a light at the end of the tunnel is emerging. We will be lighting the third Advent candle this Sunday morning and at Denholme Shared Church we will be listening to a reflection reminding us that there is a Kingdom that will prevail long after this world's struggles have subsided, not because every evil has been conquered or overcome but because the mark of God's coming is indelibly stamped in the history and destiny of this world.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ child in a couple of weeks let us prepare to reflect his light and hope to others, those who are both known and unknown.

Affirmation of Faith

Holy, holy, holy
Is the Lord God almighty,
Who was, and is, and is to come
We believe in God the Father
Who created all things:
For by his will they were created
And have their being
We believe in God the Son,
Who was slain:
For with his blood,
He purchased us for God,
From every tribe and language
From every people and nation.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit:
The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!"
Even so come, Lord Jesus! Amen

Praise response

Restore us, Lord God of hosts.
Turn the light of your face to us and save us.
Will you not give us life again.
That your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your mercy, O Lord
and grant us your salvation.
Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!

Prayers of Intercession

Almighty God, we give you thanks today for the ministry of John the Baptist.
May we hear his call to follow Jesus and follow in the way that he prepared.
Give us the gift of your Holy Spirit, that we too may proclaim your presence in
the world. Give us courage to share the Good News with those around us, to
show your love and to care with your heart.

Lord in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

Lord, we pray for the world, giving thanks for its beauty and wonder. We pray that we would treat the people and resources of the world with greater respect and honour. We hold before you all those who are in places of war, famine, injustice and inequality. We pray that you would bless the work of all those who seek to bring peace and justice: may they find encouragement in their vision today. Guide us to know how we may play our part in the cause of right.

Lord in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

Heavenly Father, bless our communities. Be with our families, our friends and all our neighbours. Help us to be mindful of one another and support each other. May those who feel far apart, be brought close by your love and Spirit. Help us to bring the story of your coming among us to those who desperately need to hear that you are close.

Lord in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

Lord God, be with those who are ill and in need. Be with those in pain, those with COVID and all those with terminal diagnoses. Be with those suffering from dementia, those who are in great anxiety and stress. Be with all those who care for loved ones, especially those unable to visit due to the current restrictions. Bless all our local healthcare providers, our residential care homes and all who minister to those who struggle.

Lord in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

Living God, you promise that you will comfort all who mourn. Be with all those who have hearts heavy with grief: those who are recently bereaved and those who mourn the death of loved ones from weeks, months or years ago. Be especially close to those for whom this Christmas season is darkened by sadness and loss. May they glimpse the light of hope which the true message of Christmas brings and may that light shine, however dimly, for them. Be with all our local Funeral Directors and all who minister to the dying and the bereaved.

Lord in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

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.**

Closing Prayers

We give thanks, O Lord, for your heavenly gifts;
Kindle in us the fire of your Spirit
That when your Christ comes again
We may shine as lights before his face;
Who is alive and reigns now and for ever. **Amen.**

Blessing

May God himself, the God of peace make you perfect and holy,
and keep you safe and blameless, in spirit soul and body
for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Sending Out

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:
in the name of Christ. Amen.