



The Second Sunday of Advent 7th December 2025

In the name of the + Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

HYMN

1. The Lord will come and not be slow,
His footsteps cannot err;
Before Him righteousness shall go,
His royal harbinger.

2. Truth from the earth, like to a flower,
Shall bud and blossom then;
And justice, from her heavenly bower,
Look down on mortal men.

4. Rise, God, judge thou the earth in might,
This wicked earth redress;
For thou art he who shalt by right
The nations all possess.

5. The nations all whom thou hast made
Shall come, and all shall frame
To bow them low before thee, Lord,
And glorify thy Name.

6. For great thou art, and wonders great
By Thy strong hand are done:
Thou in Thy everlasting seat
Remainest God alone.

Invitation to Confession

A voice cries out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord.'
So let us listen and turn to the Lord in penitence and faith.

Loving and faithful God, as we begin the season of Advent, we celebrate that Jesus has come, and that He promises to come again! Jesus came to bring light and hope, but our hearts are often shrouded by darkness and despair. Jesus came to bring joy and peace, but our hearts are often encased by sorrow and turmoil. Jesus came to bring life and love, but our hearts are often hardened by resistance and contempt. As Jesus entered the world to conquer sin and death, we open our hearts in confession to be cleansed from our sinfulness and to be restored to the image of Jesus.

Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy

Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

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

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

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

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true:
to you be praise and glory for ever.
Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth
as a burning and shining light.
May we your servants rejoice in his light,
and so be led to witness to him
who is the Lord of our coming kingdom,
Jesus our Saviour and King of the ages.
Blessed be God for ever.

A Reading from The Old Testament
Isaiah 11 1-10

The Branch from Jesse

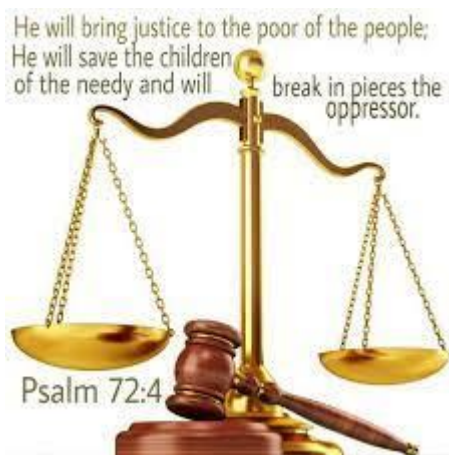
11 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—
3 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
 or decide by what he hears with his ears;
 4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
 with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
 He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
 with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
 5 Righteousness will be his belt
 and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
 6 The wolf will live with the lamb,
 the leopard will lie down with the goat,
 the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
 and a little child will lead them.
 7 The cow will feed with the bear,
 their young will lie down together,
 and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
 8 The infant will play near the cobra's den,
 and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.
 9 They will neither harm nor destroy
 on all my holy mountain,
 for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
 as the waters cover the sea.
 10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner
 for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.

This is the word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

Psalm 72

Endow the king with your justice, O God,
 the royal son with your righteousness.



2 May he judge your people in righteousness,
 your afflicted ones with justice.
 3 May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,
 the hills the fruit of righteousness.
 4 May he defend the afflicted among the people
 and save the children of the needy;
 may he crush the oppressor.
 5 May he endure as long as the sun,
 as long as the moon, through all generations.
 6 May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
 like showers watering the earth.

7 In his days may the righteous flourish
 and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.

Then all nations will be blessed through him,
 and they will call him blessed.

18 Praise be to the Lord God, the God of Israel,
 who alone does marvellous deeds.

19 Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed 9 and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written:

"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles;
I will sing the praises of your name."

10 Again, it says, "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people."

11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;
let all the peoples extol him."

12 And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up,
one who will arise to rule over the nations;
in him the Gentiles will hope."

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

HYMN

Hills of the north, rejoice;
river and mountain spring,
hark to the advent voice;
valley and lowland, sing;
though absent long, your Lord is nigh;
he judgment brings and victory.

Lands of the East, awake,
soon shall your sons be free;
the sleep of ages break,
and rise to liberty.
On your far hills, long cold and grey,
has dawned the everlasting day.

Isles of the southern seas,
deep in your coral caves
pent be each warring breeze,
lulled be your restless waves:
he comes to reign with boundless sway,
and makes your wastes his great highway.

Shores of the utmost West,
ye that have waited long,
unvisited, unblessed,
break forth to swelling song;
high raise the note, that Jesus died,
yet lives and reigns, the Crucified.

Shout, while ye journey home;
songs be in every mouth;
lo, from the North we come,
from East, and West, and South.
city of God, the bond are free,
we come to live and reign in thee!

Alleluia, alleluia.

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Alleluia.

The Gospel
Matthew 3 1-12

The Holy Gospel is written in the 3rd Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew beginning at the 1st verse. Glory be to thee, O Lord

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"

4 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The axe 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.

11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise be to thee, O Christ

Reflection

When John the Baptist burst onto the scene it was an extraordinary moment. For nearly 400 hundred years there had been no prophetic voice. No one had arisen to say to the people of Israel "Thus says the Lord". John breaks this silence.

John the Baptist is the last of the prophets. Their message was full of promise but partial, incomplete, they all pointed forward and culminate in John who stands at a pivotal point between the Old Testament and the New.

In Exeter Cathedral there is a frieze of pictures which run over the screen separating the nave from the quire. They start with the creation, run through events from the Old Testament, then the life of Jesus and end with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The central picture above the 'golden gate' is not the birth of Jesus as you might expect, but John the Baptist. Jesus said of John that he was the greatest of all the prophets because he is the last, he is the pivot point between the old and new covenants, and he points us towards Jesus.

In the text it says that John proclaimed a baptism 'of repentance for the forgiveness of sins'. The Greek word does not mean 'repentance' it means 'change your mind' or 'go beyond your mind' (see Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:15). Unfortunately, in the fourth century, St. Jerome translated the word into Latin as *paenitentia* ("repent" or "do penance"), which has affected our understanding of the Gospel and the

Christian life ever since. The word used is *metanoeite* and refers to 'a fundamental change of mind, how we view the world, how we process and perceive what is happening'. Jesus clearly believed in change. His first public words illustrate this.

Metanoeite is the message of the Gospel, it is Good News. If we grasp it then it draws from us a positive, proactive, life affirming response. Change your mind! Or stop! It is as if you drive and miss a turn – now you are going the wrong way and the longer you continue the further it becomes wrong. You need to stop, maybe turn completely back and find the turning, or at least set off on a direction which will eventually restore the correct route.

It does not have the associations of 'repent'. Repent is not a word we use much now, it has rather negative associations. It suggests regret, guilt or sorrow. Sorrow and guilt are negative powerless words – we are just sorry and helpless. Just sorry. Sorry for what we have done, sorry for what has happened to us, sorry that we never 'get it together', sorry that we seem stuck, sorry that we feel a failure, sorry that we feel depressed and exhausted, sorry that we no longer care.

But this is not what is meant. What is meant can be life changing.

This is a call to change our thought process and go beyond our mind's present limitations. It is not easy to change the way we think, patterns are deeply ingrained, we are affected by our character, our history, our present environment etc. But it is possible as modern psychology will agree.

But if we wait to 'feel' like changing – we could never change.

It requires deliberate action – a choice on our part. The key to almost all change is simply action. If we start to do it, think it, - just be it, much will follow. So much of what we fight is in our heads – not in reality. Change our minds – we can change our lives.

You can choose to change, to forgive, to think about this person or this situation, or relationship differently. To smile, to be kind.

Easy to say? Perhaps, but hear the rest of John's words. The one coming after him will baptise with the Holy Spirit? What can that mean? Further on in the gospel we find Jesus telling us about his presence with us always. The Spirit of God has been with creation from the beginning and is still present.

Just as the people were immersed in the water of Jordan, so when we receive Jesus, we are immersed in the Holy Spirit. We now live in an environment where we have recourse to God's help and wisdom – always. We might think of the Holy Spirit like the water in the river – if we will allow, like water, the Spirit will support us through life and enable us to swim.

We are at a pivotal time for our world. *Metanoeite* (*change*) is a word for our time. We have to change the way we think and be open to a new and probably disturbing future. We actually have no choice. There has been a rupture, a break with our remembered past, for some, significantly so. There is no return, we have to pass through.

These four weeks of advent have messages from the scripture that are challenging. But that is for our good. They are meant to be spiritual preparation for welcoming the incarnation – the coming of God among us in the person of Jesus.

As we prepare for Christmas, try to find time for self-contemplation and an honest assessment of your life. Where and how might change be helpful? Think about - how you think – how you interpret your world. What ingrained patterns do you recognise, which don't help you. Could you decide to let go and think differently? How we think shows itself by how we live, the sort of people we are. Jesus said, "As a man thinks – so he is."

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Intercessions

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

That God may bring in his kingdom with justice and mercy,
Lord, have mercy.

That God may establish among the nations
his sceptre of righteousness,
Lord, have mercy.

That we may seek Christ in the Scriptures
and recognize him in the breaking of the bread,
Lord, have mercy.

That God may bind up the broken-hearted,
restore the sick
and raise up all who have fallen,
Lord, have mercy.

That the light of God's coming may dawn
on all who live in darkness and the shadow of death,
Lord, have mercy.

That, with all the saints in light,
we may shine forth as lights for the world,
Lord, have mercy.

We commend ourselves and all for whom we pray
to the mercy and protection of our heavenly Father:

You are our eternal salvation, the unfailing life of the world.
light everlasting, you are truly our redemption.

Grieving that the human race was perishing through the tempter's power,
without leaving the heights you came to the depths in your loving kindness.
Readily taking our humanity by your own gracious will,
you saved all earthly creatures, long since lost, restoring joy to the world.

Redeem our souls and bodies, O Christ, and so possess us as your shining dwellings.
By your first coming, make us righteous; at your second coming, set us free:
so that when the world is filled with light and you judge all things,
we may be clad in spotless robes and follow in your steps, O King into the heavenly hall. Amen
(Source unknown, 10th century)

Almighty God,
as your blessed Son Jesus Christ
first came to seek and to save the lost;
so may he come again to find in us
the completion of his redeeming work;
for he is now alive
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.
Amen.

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.

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.

HYMN

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel!
Redeem thy captive Israel
That into exile drear is gone,
Far from the face of God's dear Son.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

2 O come, thou Root of Jesse! draw
The quarry from the lion's claw;
From those dread caverns of the grave,
From nether hell, thy people save.

3. O come, O come, thou Dayspring bright!
Pour on our souls thy healing light;
Dispel the long night's lingering gloom,
And pierce the shadows of the tomb

4. O Come, thou Lord of David's Key!
The royal door fling wide and free;
Safeguard for us the heavenward road,
And bar the way to death's abode

O come, Desire of nations! Show
Thy kingly reign on earth below;
Thou Corner-stone, uniting all,
Restore the ruin of our fall.

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