

Lessons for 2nd Sunday of Advent – December 10, 2023

Collect: Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11

“Comfort, O comfort my people,” says your God. “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up; you voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

You have been gracious to your land, O Lord,
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.
You have forgiven the iniquity of your people
and blotted out all their sins.

I will listen to what the Lord God is saying,
for he is speaking peace to his faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to him.

Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth shall spring up from the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

The Lord will indeed grant prosperity
and our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness shall go before him,
and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.

Second Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-15a

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of person ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Morning Prayer Advent 2– December 10, 2023

Hymn 66 – Come, thou long expected Jesus

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set they people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art:
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.

BCP - Page 75 – Advent Greeting

In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a
highway for our God.

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

BCP – Pages 79 – Invitation to Confession

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our
heavenly Father, to set forth his praise, to hear his holy Word, and to ask, for
ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and
our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to
worship him, let us kneel or sit in silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts
confess our sins that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and
mercy.

BCP – Pages 79-80 – Confession and Absolution

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word,
and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not
loved you with our whole heart; we have loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

BCP – Page 80 - Gloria

O Lord, open thou our lips.
And our mouth shall show forth thy praise.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.*

BCP – Page 82 – Venite

Come, let us sing unto the Lord;
 let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before hisw presence with thanksgiving
 and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.
For the Lord is a great God,
 and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are the caverns of the earth,
 and the heights of the hills are his also.
The sea is his, for he made it,
 and his hands have molded the dry land.
Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee,
 And kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.
 Oh, that today ou would hearken to his voice!

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

First Reading – Isaiah 40:1-11

Second Reading – 2 Peter 3:8-15a

Hymn 671- Amazing grace!

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

Gospel – Mark 1:1-8

Sermon – The Rev. Charles Rowins

BCP – page 96 - The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

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the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
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and the life everlasting. Amen.

BCP – page 97 – the Lord’s Prayer

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.
Let us pray.

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

BCP – page 97-98 – Suffrages A

Show us your mercy, O Lord;
And grant us your salvation.
Clothe your ministers with righteousness;
Let you people sing with joy.
Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;
For only in you can we live in safety.
Lord, keep this nation under thy care;
And guide us in the way of justice and truth.
Let your way be known upon earth;
Your saving health among all nations.
Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;
Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.
Create in us clean hearts, O God;
And sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

Collect for 2nd Sunday of Advent

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

BCP Prayers for Sundays, Peace and Guidance – pages 98, 99 and 100

O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O God, the author of peace and lover of concord, to know you is eternal life and to serve you is perfect freedom: Defend us, your humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in your defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight: through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

BCP – page 101 - The General Thanksgiving

*Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants
give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness
to us and to all whom you have made.*

*We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by
our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.*

*And, we, pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly
thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips,
but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking
before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ
our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory
throughout all ages. Amen.*

Announcements

Hymn 717 - America – portions of stanzas 1 and 3

*My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;
Long my our land be bright with freedom's holy light;
Protect us by thy might, great God, our King.*

BCP – page 59 – Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication unto thee, and hast promised through thy well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name thou wilt be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen.

BCP – page 59 – The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

Hymn 496 – How bright appears the Morning Star

How bright appears the Morning Star, with mercy beaming from afar;
the host of heaven rejoices;
O righteous Branch, O Jesse's Rod! Thou Son of Man and Son of God!
we, too, will lift our voices;
Jesus, Jesus! Holy, holy, yet most lowly, draw thou near us;
great Emmanuel, come and hear us.

Thou circled by the hosts on high, he deigned to cast a pitying eye
upon his helpless creature;
the whole creation's Head and Lord, by highest seraphim adored,
assumed our very nature;
Jesus, grant us, through thy merit to inherit thy salvation;
hear, O hear our supplication.

Rejoice, ye heavens; thou earth reply; with praise, ye sinners, fill the sky,
for this his Incarnation.

Incarnate God, put forth thy power, ride on, ride on, great Conqueror,
till all know thy salvation.

Amen, amen! Alleluia, alleluia! Praise be given evermore,
by earth and heaven.

Dismissal

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins on the 2nd Sunday of Advent, December 10, 2023, at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland.

One of the things that church-goers do really well is potluck suppers. You all, we all, certainly fit this description. If there was a potluck supper contest, I am certain that we would be in line for a ribbon. Maybe even a blue ribbon.

Now, when we think about a potluck supper, we focus on what's on the table. It's go time. But this morning I would like us to consider an earlier step in the potluck supper process. Not what appears on the table, ready to eat. But the moment we decided what to bring, what to contribute. What went into that decision?

Isn't the biggest factor in that decision what we do well? We don't agree to contribute something we don't do well. What will people think? We'll be the talk of the whole Island. "Did you have any of that stuff that _____ (fill the blank with your name) contributed?"

No, we offer to bring what we do best. And often it's the same thing year after year. And others look forward to that consistency. "I sure hope _____ (fill the blank with someone else's name) brings that peach pie or meatloaf or coleslaw."

Well, you say, what does this have to do with today's lessons. Funny you should ask. Here you go. From the Gospel of Mark: "See, I am sending my messenger, John, ahead of you, who will proclaim a baptism for the repentance of sins."

Now, why do you suppose God picked John to execute this important task? After all, John was a strange duck. He was clothed with camel's hair, had a leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. Well, maybe, just maybe, God chose John because John didn't proclaim himself. Rather he proclaimed Jesus. In other words, John was modest. He saw himself not as the message, but the messenger. Not "Let me tell you about myself." But "Let me tell you about Jesus."

Back to the potluck supper. When we contribute a dish to a potluck supper, we do so with a mix of pride and modesty. We're proud to be asked to contribute, but we're probably not looking for a blue ribbon. Rather, we're happy simply to

contribute what we do well. In other words, our best. If we get a ribbon for our best, terrific. But, if not, we are pleased to have contributed our best.

In John's case, he was honored to have been asked to proclaim this message: "The One who can really make a difference in your life is Jesus of Nazareth." John was a spokesperson. He was an agent for Christ. He was a happy camper, not because of his wardrobe, but because he was in a new relationship with the Messiah. Like many others, John had been waiting for the Messiah. And here, he, the Messiah was. And not here casually, but here to ask a favor, namely to solicit John to proclaim the arrival of Jesus.

Jesus said to John, "I want you to tell people about my arrival." To which John might well have answered "Who? Me?" "Yes, John, you. I want you to help me. Share your experience, your conviction, your sense of being with whom you are meant to be."

Back to the potluck. John's contribution was Jesus. This was what Jesus wanted John to contribute. And John did so. And the news of this remarkable dish began to spread. Even making it to an Island on the Chesapeake on the other side of the world. What a journey. What a blessing. "I have baptized you with water; but he, Jesus, will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." And your life won't be the same. You will be filled with, The Spirit, for a lifetime and beyond.

And, here we are. Happy campers in a very challenging world. It's quite a Story. And it's our Story too. John the Baptist wasn't the only person asked to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. The Messiah himself asked you and me. We can't remember exactly when the Ask took place. But that it took place is not in doubt. After all, we're here, with one another. Different experiences, but basically the same result.

And with the same expectation to share the Good News that we have experienced and continue to experience. Isn't it very satisfying to arrive at a potluck supper with our contribution, and then, at the end of the supper, see our dish empty and people asking for the recipe?

Okay, you say. Enough of the potluck supper analogy? No, I take that back. Just one more thing.

You know, of course, that John the Baptist wasn't the only one at God's potluck. Look at today's lessons. Isaiah was there. The Psalmist was there. Peter was there also. Isaiah brought comfort food. The Psalmist brought poetry: "Mercy and truth have met together." Peter brought "patience."

And guess what. The potluck supper is still going on. And we're there. And we shouldn't underestimate the importance of our individual contributions to the Potluck. "The gifts of God for the people of God." We received the gift of faith. And now we're sharing the gift.

Maybe the name is confusing. Potluck sounds "iffy," doesn't it? As in "We're not sure, but we'll give it a try." Well, we have given it a try, and we're back for more. Both to receive and to share. Yes, for ourselves, but also for others. And, at the end of each supper, silently and sometimes aloud, we say "Thank you, Jesus. We'll be back with something special to share. You shared your life for us. The least we can do to say thank you is to contribute our lives to others.

Thank you, Lord. Amen.