



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 10 DECEMBER 2023 – THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

COLLECT

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.

Psalm 85.1-2, 8-13

- 1 Lord, you were gracious to your land; ♦
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
- 2 You forgave the offence of your people ♦
and covered all their sins.
- 8 I will listen to what the Lord God will say, ♦
for he shall speak peace to his people and to the faithful,
that they turn not again to folly.
- 9 Truly, his salvation is near to those who fear him, ♦
that his glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Mercy and truth are met together, ♦
righteousness and peace have kissed each other;
- 11 Truth shall spring up from the earth ♦
and righteousness look down from heaven.
- 12 The Lord will indeed give all that is good, ♦
and our land will yield its increase.
- 13 Righteousness shall go before him ♦
and direct his steps in the way.

A reading from the book of Isaiah, chapter 40, verses 1-11.

God's People Are Comforted

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 for ever.
Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your 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.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation (for Communion services only)

Alleluia! Alleluia!

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

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Mark, chapter 1, verses 1-8.

Glory to you, O Lord

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

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.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Hannah...

As we journey through Advent, we come at the arrival of Jesus from a number of different angles. Today we hear the opening words of the Gospel of Mark. Mark's account has nothing to say about the nativity, but it nevertheless begins in the nuts and bolts of history. It starts with John the Baptist- a man on the edge- wearing camel's hair, a leather belt and eating locusts and honey- a man out on the wild fringes of society and of the landscape- calling, calling. His role is to make the way ready for that glory to be revealed. There were scholars, there were pharisees, there were Jewish Elders, there were hundreds of years of waiting, watching, interpreting the scriptures- there was a whole body of knowledge and folklore about who this person- the messiah- would be. And yet God's chosen herald is outside of all that- an eccentric wandering prophet, very much unconventional in every sense.

And from the edge, John the Baptist points. He points with his actions- baptising in water as a symbolic way of acting out the return from exile- the beginning of belonging again. And in that particular pointing action, a few verses after this, John baptises Jesus- Jesus' identity is proclaimed and the Holy Spirit is present.

John points with his actions, but he also points with his words. He almost can't find language lowly enough and lofty enough to articulate the difference between him and Christ. He tries- he talks about not even being worthy to tie the sandals of Jesus. That observation puts us in mind of the scandal of the gospel actually, because we know that Jesus would have no problem asking John to do just that- he asks us to wash his feet, just as he washes ours; he asks us to humble ourselves, to serve and to make space for others. As we take a step closer to Christmas, in John's words and actions we are reminded of the wildness of Christ and of the kind of King we are called to follow.

