

Collect, Readings and Reflection for 07 December 2025, the Second Sunday of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Matthew 3:1-12

Collect (*the Church's prayer for today*):

Almighty God, purify our hearts and minds,
that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again
as judge and saviour
we may be ready
to receive him,
who is our Lord and our God.
Amen.

Today's reflection is by Reader, Pete Gillions.

The gospel reading tells us of John the Baptist, a man with a message for his generation and a message for us today. John's call to repentance that opened the eyes of his countrymen is still calling out to each of us today. The fact that faith is no longer fashionable in our country right now doesn't mean it is no longer true. It is easy as we see Christianity on the decline in our culture to allow ourselves to lose our conviction and confidence in the power of the gospel. The media's mocking tone and rolling of the eyes mean that we can feel we are rowing against the tide. Know this, our faith is an anvil that has worn out many heavier hammers than these.

John calls out for us to see that God is still moving right here and now. He calls out to for us to realise that our vision of who God is and what God is doing is too small. In our day to day lives we can so easily lose sight of what God is going. John calls us to change. The original Greek word translated as repentance means 'Go beyond the mind you have' 'change your way of thinking', 'open your eyes'.

John called 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near' is more than call for one decisive step, it is a call for continual renewal. The apostle Paul writing to the Church in Rome reminds us "Do not conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind". It is an ongoing process where we seek to see everything in a new way. C.S. Lewis puts it this way "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

The call to change comes to us in this season of Advent when we anticipate and reflect on the birth of Jesus. That is the hinge point of all human history. God came to us in the vulnerability of a new born baby revealing to us the value of all human life as we are all made in God's image. That even includes people we don't actually like! Christ coming to earth reminds us that God is with us. The call to 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near' is a call to find out true freedom in God's service, to become the person you were truly meant to be. Each one of us has that call on our lives.

But there is another aspect to advent, that is the anticipation of his second coming. Christ's promise to one day restore all things changes not only our ultimate future. This is the stuff not of abstract theology but a life changing truth. A hope, a promise that the best is yet to be. A hope that energises us to change the now and bring something of heaven to earth. This hope helps us deal with the tragedy of life here and now. We have a hope that is steadfast and certain, not based on our achievement but on all that Christ has done. We see the love of God manifest through His life. We see him sharing the pain of the world by His death on the cross. And we see him breaking the power of death by His mighty resurrection. And we see the assured hope for the future in His promise to restore all things.

For many years I have watched a lovely friend of ours lose his independence to M.S., a debilitating degenerative illness. There was only one trajectory and that was downhill. As the years passed he lost his ability to walk and at the end the use of his arms also. He died last a few day ago. You can ask the question where is God in all of that. What I saw was the love of God extended to him through the care of his wife and friends. That doesn't make it all right, of course, but sometimes it is through the fractured cracks in our lives that the light comes in. But there is something more. His heartbroken wife yet spoke of hope, that Andy would be now be free from being trapped in his wheelchair, leaping and dancing and praising God'

This is not the stuff of fanciful fairy tales. When John said 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near' what he was promising was coming and has now come through Christ, the Christ who died, the Christ who rose again. The Christ who will come again in glory.

To Him be the glory now and forever. Amen