



March Team Ministry

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

Welcome

3rd Sunday of Advent ~ December 13th 2020

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 279232 or at andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

We have Church services with social distancing, and also, for the foreseeable future, our zooming, emailing and leaflet deliveries. We want people to have a genuine choice. We are also trying to allow other aspects of the church's life to happen. Ideas and suggestions welcome.

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am

St Mary's Sundays 9.15am

St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."

Socially Distanced CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Everyone Welcome at these services

Christingles – take advantage of on-line opportunities.

Saturday 19th December 11am at St Peter's, outdoor Carol singing.

Sunday 20th December Morning Services as usual

"Carol Services" 3pm St Mary's, 4.30pm St John's, 6.30pm St Peter's.

Tuesday 22nd December 10am Communion at St John's

Wednesday 23rd December 10am Communion at St Peter's

Christmas Eve Crib Service 4pm St Peter.

Christmas Eve Communion 8.30pm St John, 11.30pm St Peter.

Christmas Day Communion 8am & 11am St Peter; 9.15am St Mary; 9.30am St John

Prayers for this Week

O God, most high and most near, you send glad tidings to the lowly, you hide not your face from the poor; those who dwell in darkness you call into the light. Take away our blindness, remove the hardness of our hearts, and form us into a humble people, that, at the advent of your Son, we may find joy in his saving presence. We ask this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near: your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

Lord of light, who sent the Baptist to offer hope and face the world's scorn: open our ears to hear the cries from the margins, exposing our vision and calling us to a step of faith; through Jesus Christ, the one who is to come.

Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Meditation

We have been working through the paragraphs of the Nicene Creed in advent, in dialogue with the themes of the Advent candles. Today we reach John the Baptist and '*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.*'

The most important memory of John the Baptist that the early church had was that he baptised Jesus. This has the potential to be embarrassing on two accounts. One, it could be seen to imply that Jesus was just a disciple of John who took over after John's arrest. Two, that by accepting John's baptism of repentance, Jesus was acknowledging that he too needed a fresh start. The early church, through the gospel accounts, attempts to deal with these in several ways. They record John's reluctance to baptise Jesus, and show it only happens because Jesus takes control and instructs John to do so.

They report how disciples and the crowd move from following John to following Jesus. They stress that a core part of John's message is to point to the greater one who will follow him. They stress John as the last in the line of old testament prophets, preparing the way for the new way. They stress that Jesus not only takes on John's message of repentance, but adds that the Kingdom is at hand, here and now.

The final, and most important aspect of Jesus' baptism, is the appearance of the Holy Spirit. In our Gospel accounts this gradually gets more public and spectacular. In the earlier accounts it may be that the Holy Spirit only is seen and heard by Jesus, or Jesus and John, but by the later accounts it is the whole crowd who are given this revelation. Jesus is the Son of God! The Holy Spirit tells of the relationship; Father and Son. A truly Trinitarian moment that links the three persons of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

the Lord. The Holy Spirit is God, not just an agent or adjunct, or characteristic of God. God is not just known and experienced through his actions, God is his actions. God is dynamic not static. We are asked not to ponder who God **is**, but what he **does**. Our own individual identities are God given, but we are asked to live lives true to that identity. We study the world not so much as to understand it, as to change it; your kingdom come. So how we act is who we are, so the Holy Spirit as God's action and energy is **with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified.**

the giver of life. Some may see this as the Spirit giving the concept of life, others may see it as giving each individual life. Some will see it mainly in terms of human lives, others will see it in terms of all living things. Following my previous paragraph I focus not so much as whether we see it as life or lives, but that whichever are given. We receive our life and the concept of living as gift, a present. And we can then use it, hopefully for good, for God. And as we have received life, we give our lives for others, and God gives his life for us.

proceeds The western church altered the creed from the originally agreed form by adding that the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as the Father. The western understanding has the strength that just as the Father sent the Son, so the Son sends the Spirit to us. When Jesus ascends the Spirit is sent to be the continuing divine

presence. However, sometimes this has reinforced hierarchical tendencies in Church and society echoing a divine hierarchy of Father>Son>Spirit and the sense that God only became a father when he had a son. The eastern understanding both reminds us of the Holy Spirit being active before Jesus walked the earth and that the very nature of God is parental, and that we participate in God rather than receive from him.

The Holy Spirit *speaks through the prophets*. Jesus coming to John shows he comes in this tradition and the Holy Spirit confirms this choice.

Jesus chooses to be seen in succession to John, indeed as the climax of the whole tradition John the Baptist stands in. Jesus could have chosen to stand in other traditions; the Pharisees who tried to make holiness acceptable to all through clear rules and codes of practice, but Jesus chose the way where holiness is a gift from God, and no one is deemed unworthy of God's love. Or the Sadducees, those whose commitments and identity revolved round the centres of power, status and wealth, but rather Jesus chose to be identified with those who are the ordinary villagers, or even those who have been cast into various sorts of wilderness. Or the Zealots who took up armed rebellion, maybe for a good cause, but end up sowing hatred, fear and death, rather Jesus chose the way of turning the other cheek and disarming people with silence, forgiveness and love. Or, like those who went away and attempted to settle in isolated wilderness security, convincing themselves that they were amongst the few who would be saved and favoured, but rather Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and came from the wilderness to where life occurs. Or like those Herodians who tried to re-invent their identity as chosen people and ended up living lives as if spoilt children, but rather Jesus came for all nations, and asked adults to rediscover their inner child. Jesus chose to follow John the Baptist in accepting baptism showing he belonged and offered a new way and a fresh start, and the Holy Spirit proclaimed that Jesus is the Son of God is well pleased, and that we are children of God, and that is pleasing too. The Lord is here, his Spirit is with us.

Next week, the Church and Mary.

God bless, Andrew

Prayers

People of God: awake ! the day is coming soon when we shall see God face to face. Remember the ways and works of God, God calls us out of darkness to walk in the light of his coming. We are God's children.

Lord make us one as we walk with Christ today and forever.

People of God: be glad ! God delights in us, giving us joy for sadness and turning dark to light. Be strong in hope therefore: for God comes to save. We are God's children.

Lord make us one as we walk with Christ today and forever.

People of God: return ! We are called to be God's own. From the mountains announce the good news. God comes in justice and peace. We are God's children.

Lord make us one as we walk with Christ today and forever.

People of God: prepare ! God above all, maker of all, is one with us in Christ.

Come Lord Jesus !

God, the mighty God, bends down in love to earth.

Come Lord Jesus !

God with us, God beside us, comes to the world he has made.

Come Lord Jesus !

We are God's children, we seek the coming Christ.

We pray for the coming of God's kingdom;

Father by your Spirit, bring in your kingdom.

You sent your Son to bring good news to the poor, sight to the blind, freedom to captives, and salvation to your people: anoint us with your Spirit; rouse us to work in his name. ***Father by your Spirit, bring in your kingdom.***

Send us to bring help to the poor and freedom to the oppressed.

Father by your Spirit, bring in your kingdom.

Send us to tell the world the good news of your healing love.

Father by your Spirit, bring in your kingdom.

Send us to those who mourn, to bring joy instead of grief.

Father by your Spirit, bring in your kingdom.

Send us to proclaim that the time is here for you to save your people.

Father by your Spirit, bring in your kingdom.

God of mercy, you know and love us and hear our prayer: keep us in the eternal fellowship of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Amen.