

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Advent 2 (Year A)

Isa 11:1-10      Rom 15:4-13      Matthew 3:1-12

In speaking and listening, may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Advent is a season of waiting and of preparation: preparation for the celebration of God coming among us as one of us in the birth of Jesus, and preparation of our own hearts for the culmination of the salvation or healing that he initiated, the full revelation of God's Kingdom for which the whole creation was made.

A time to pause in anticipation, a time to wait, a time to prepare is necessary because these two are both mysteries.

To be able to see God in a human baby born in the poverty of a cattle cave and lid in a feeding takes time.

To even begin to believe that we could live in an atmosphere of total unconditional love, to even begin to imagine what that might look like, takes time.

Through the generations God raises up prophets: .

Today's readings offer us the wisdom of two such prophets, which we will turn to in just a moment.

First I would like you to take a moment to see how far you can get in imagining a world of unconditional love. What might it be like?

I wonder if you came up with any of the same ideas as me:

I thought about a world without war or violence: a place of complete peace in which people lived alongside one another happily.

I thought about a world where all the resources were fairly shared so that no one was left in poverty: a place where everyone is content with "enough".

I thought about a world where love for all creation meant that what we describe as the natural world was cherished and flourishing: a healthy planet.

I thought about a world where people so trust in God's love they are full of love themselves.

The prophet Isaiah looks towards one sent by God to help us find that kind of world. He foresees our need to be shown how to move into the reign of God where all is the way God created it.

One will come with God's spirit bringing his wisdom and understanding, his gift to help people find a new wise way, and his power to overcome what holds them back, his complete delight and trust in God before all else.

This One will show what is of God and what is not. He will find in favour of the poor and restore fairness to those who do not take up violence to fight for themselves.

The land will become a common home for all – with animals co-habiting in peace.

“They will not hurt or destroy”

This will be a place where the full knowledge of God, the reality of the unconditional love in which we are all made, will transform everything.

John the Baptist, our gospel, carries the voice of the ancient prophets into the coming era of Jesus.

He speaks of the same One to come in more robust language!

His message reflects the gap between the way the world is now and the ancient vision of the Kingdom of God.

“Repent for the Kingdom of God has come near”

The One for whom the prophet's spoke has come.

Unconditional love is being shown to the world in person.

For John, the presence of Jesus in the world is going to throw into stark relief all that is not of God, all that is not of love, all that is an obstacle to all creation experiencing a common home where no one is poor and there is no war.

It is no wonder he uses strong and urgent language because he sees a clear choice for his people:

Repent and discover the kingdom of God

Turn away from all that feels normal but is actually getting in the way of the life you were made for; turn towards the source of life in all its fullness.

In his enthusiasm he paints a picture of the arrival of Jesus amongst us creating split between all that is of love, and all that is not, all that is fruitful and all that is not, all that is wholesome and all that is chaff.

John draws people into an active response: the baptism in water marking their intention to turn towards the Kingdom that is coming near in Jesus.

But he also directs them beyond his own message, and even beyond dependence on good intentions alone. He directs them towards Jesus who will give them the gift that enables them to share fully in the life of response to God's love that he reveals.

The gift of the Holy Spirit.

What John sees is that the One coming, the one upon whom the spirit of the Lord rests, will not just show us what the love of God looks like, or even just additionally teach us how to try to copy it. He will show us how that gift of love is given to us, at work in our inner-selves. He seeks to release the gift of love within us so that we can share love's mission in the world. We can truly become agents of the coming of God's Kingdom like him.

This Advent season is a time of waiting and preparation. A time to seek a renewal of vision, and find in ourselves the eyes of a prophet.

To be able to see God in a human baby born in the poverty of a cattle cave and lid in a feeding takes time.

To even begin to believe that we could live in an atmosphere of total unconditional love, to even begin to imagine what that might look like, takes time.

It takes time and the gift of the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts, opening to us the experience living in God's presence, the experience of the drawing near of the Kingdom of God, the experience of becoming a prophet for God.

May it be our Advent prayer today that our preparation is a waiting on the power of the Holy Spirit at work through us so that we grow more fully into people who are gifted with being able to see with inspired vision. To be able to see where God is at work in ordinary things, and to be able to look forward towards God's transformation of all that gets in the way of God's unconditional love now.

So that in turn our gift to those around us is a glimpse through our love for them of the Kingdom of God drawing near this Christmas. Amen

