

Pilton, Croscombe, North Wootton and Dinder
Advent 3
People immersed in God

Affirmation of God's presence

Affirmation

Advent is a time when we rejoice in the coming of Christ into our lives, that he came at Christmas, and that he comes again to be our Lord and King.

Advent celebrates that our God comes to us again and again. Today is the Third Sunday in Advent, a day when we remember John the Baptist and all who turn towards God to serve him.

Invitation to worship

With John the Baptist and God's faithful we immerse ourselves in the love, light and leading of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Lord is here.

His Spirit is with us.

Hymn On Jordan's Bank

<https://youtu.be/plr21LgFpg>

Silence

Confession

Copyright Church of England and D. Adam, Welcoming the Light.

When the Lord comes,
he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness,
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.
Therefore in the light of Christ let us confess our sins:

**God of mercy,
we acknowledge that we are all sinners.
We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said
and done,
and are mindful of all that we have failed to do.
For the sake of Jesus, who died for us,
forgive us for all that is past,
and help us to live each day
in the light of Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

May God our Father forgive *us our* sins
and bring *us* to the eternal joy of his kingdom,
where dust and ashes have no dominion.
Amen.

Psalm 126

This weeks version is by a group called the Orchardist. There are no lyrics on the video but it was so beautiful I wanted to share it with you.

<https://youtu.be/uZ8ZS88TX1M>

A Harvest of Joy

Copyright Church of England and D. Adam, Welcoming the Light.

A Song of Ascents.

¹ When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;

then it was said among the nations,

‘The Lord has done great things for them.’

³ The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

⁴ Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves

Candle Lighting

On the Third Sunday in Advent we light three candles, one for all of God’s faithful people, one for men and women of vision, and one for John the Baptist and all who immerse themselves in the Love and presence of God.

When our lives are darkened it is necessary to celebrate the presence that comes to us and the light that is given to us.

The Lord comes to us.

He abides with us.

(The lighting of the three Advent candles)

Jesus Christ is the Light of the World:
eternal light shine in our hearts.

Father you created us by your love and for
your love.

May we abide in you and you in us.

Jesus you redeemed us by your love and for
your love.

May we abide in you and you in us.

Spirit of God you guide is by your love and for
your love.

May we abide in you and you in us.

Holy and Blessed Three your love enfolds and surrounds us.

May we abide in you and you in us.

Blessed are you, Lord God, for you sent your messenger John
the Baptist to prepare the way and make ready for your
coming, that we may be prepared and ready to receive and
welcome you into our lives and homes. As you come to us in
love may we abide in your love and in your presence this day
and for ever. Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God forever.

Silence



Readings

Reading Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8- end

The Good News of Deliverance

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

For I the Lord love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,

and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.
I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations

The Gospel

John 1: 6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

“Make straight the way of the Lord” ’,
as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, ‘Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?’ John answered them, ‘I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.’ This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Sermon by Chris

Have you ever had that experience that you hear something new and then it keeps cropping up. Usually it is a word you have never noticed before and then suddenly everyone appears to be using it.

It happened to me a couple of weeks ago when someone mentioned searching for spindle berries. I think I have quite a good knowledge of the countryside and plants but somehow spindle berries had passed me by. Since then they have been mentioned in a book I was reading and I noticed them this week on a walk I had been doing for years. How I

didn't notice them before I can't answer, they weren't invisible but somehow I had always overlooked their beauty.

Sometimes we need someone to open our eyes and point out what is around us. So this morning enter John who is tasked with opening the people's eyes.

John is the witness to the light.

'There was a man.'

Quite a usual beginning but let's think for a moment, Don't forget as far as we know there had been no prophets for a while so making sure we realise he is not an Angel but a Man

John appears in the middle of the amazing cosmic introduction we will hear at Christmas. John, the Man grounds that prologue. It happened, I know, I bear witness.

John wants to avoid any labels except the one of the Voice. The voice spoken of in Isaiah crying in the wilderness. The voice who introduces us all to the light of the world.

The theme for Advent 3 is Joy. I don't know about you but there is no passage guaranteed to give me joy and awe than the prologue, today is like a tantalising prequel.

So lets think about Joy for a second

I am sure many of you have read some CS Lewis in your time

In surprised by Joy he says this.

'I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again... I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world. But then Joy is never in our power and Pleasure often is.'

Think about that for a second. Joy is never in our power and Pleasure often is The idea is that pleasure is something we can plan for ourselves but joy is a result of things outside of our control.

The people in the psalm certainly knew Joy. God had brought them home from exile, that was a time of joy. I am guessing here as we don't know but maybe things didn't immediately go back to how they were before – they had to get used to 'a new normal' but were hoping for a total restoration, familiar to anyone right now?

For generations they had been in a tough place, they may have been home now but things were not back to what they hoped so they cry out for restoration. The psalmist compares God's work of restoration to a dry wadi in the Negeb. For months on end, the wadi remains a wasteland where survival of any living thing remains in doubt.

But in a moment, as the sky opens up and the torrents of rain begin, the wadi turns from a life depriving site to a life sustaining source. That is what restoration looks like. That is what the community longs for—to know the great works of God and to relish in the full, life-giving power that will come with this reversal.

It doesn't undo the pain they have been through but there is hope after the drought.

Their response to that is joy and hope.

John witnessing to the light, the promise of restoration, it is a reminder that we don't wait in vain – the light came and will come again. We ask God to restore us again and when he does our response can only joy.

Like John we are called to be witnesses. This year many people have been able to join services online from different parts of our world. Churches have been able to witness in different ways to tell the story of God.

John witnesses and told the people the story of God as a witness – here in our villages that is the way we witness, we pray for opportunities to tell people our story. By doing that we are inviting people to consider the possibility that there is something more. We pray it leads them to continue on a journey that leads to a relationship Jesus. An invitation to something greater.

I may never have noticed spindle berries without someone telling me and their beauty has given me joy– will others

know about God unless we tell them. Unless we witness to them through our lives and share our joy.

So today let's finish today with Joy. In the service you will find a hymn to listen to – Joyful Joyful written by Van Dyke. It has been described as one of the most joyous expressions of hymn lyrics in the English language.

Van Dyke wrote of this hymn in 1911:

These verses are simple expressions of common Christian feelings and desires in this present time—hymns of today that may be sung together by people who know the thought of the age, and are not afraid that any truth of science will destroy religion, or any revolution on earth overthrow the kingdom of heaven. Therefore this is a hymn of trust and joy and hope.

What a place to end

Amen

Hymn Joyful Joyful

<https://youtu.be/eMY3ivdNzwE>

Copyright Church of England and D. Adam, Welcoming the Light.

Creed

We say in faith

**Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.**

We believe in God the Father,
who created all things:

**for by his will they were created
and have their being.**

We believe in God the Son,
who was slain:

**for with his blood,
he purchased us for God,
from every tribe and language,
from every people and nation.**

We believe in God the Holy Spirit:

**the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!'
Even so come, Lord Jesus!
Amen.**

Hymn

Thanksgiving

O God, we give you thanks and praise for all who have prepared the way for us to know you and to love you. We thank you for John the Baptist, that he prepared the people for the coming of Jesus. We remember in thanksgiving those who have taught us the faith by word and by example and all

Copyright Church of England and D. Adam, Welcoming the Light.

who have led us to you by art, music and writings. We give thanks for our baptism and the knowledge that we dwell in you and you in us. To you, O Lord our God, be praise and glory now and for ever.

Intercessions from Sue

Let us pray for the Church and for the world as we approach the celebration of God's generous gift of love to us.

Lord, your kingdom come, *your will be done.*

Lord, come and renew our faith in this Advent season. Awaken our hearts to the message of the prophets and of John the Baptist, that we may strive to make a straight path for you to enter these confused times, both in our individual daily lives and in these strange times affected by the pandemic.

Lord, your kingdom come, *your will be done.*

Lord, come to our frightened world with hope and courage. Make us aware of your words 'Do not be afraid'. We pray for all rulers and governments across the world, especially the negotiators in this country and in Europe, that they may act with wisdom and integrity, serving the needs of all people.

Lord, your kingdom come, *your will be done.*

Lord, come to the peoples of the world who feel unloved: to refugees and asylum seekers, to the homeless people on our streets, to those in abusive relationships, to people struggling to keep their homes and businesses in the present financial situation, to those facing broken relationships, to the lonely and all the great variety of difficulties that this strange time has brought. Enable us to love our neighbour with the kindness that goes the extra mile, that notices and seeks out those in need.

Lord, your kingdom come, *your will be done.*

Lord, come to our forgetful world with the reminder of your endless love. So much of life is influenced by the desire for affluence and the attitude that having more, doing more will bring greater satisfaction and happiness. The need for a deeper meaning to life is side-tracked. We pray that the dawning light of Advent will enter hearts and minds and bring awareness of your transcendent love to all humankind.

Lord, your kingdom come, *your will be done.*

Lord, come to the people in need at this time. The wintery weather and the dark December days bring additional problems to those who are suffering in body, mind and spirit. From our villages we pray for Enid Challener, Wendy Lynn, Andrew Pugh, Jeff Macklin and Michael Comer. We bring

these and others known to us individually, to our Lord confident that each and every one of them is known and loved by him.

Lord, your kingdom come, *your will be done.*

Lord, we pray with thanksgiving for those who have died recently, remembering Patrick Bennett and Doug Fleming of Pilton, and those who have died in the more distant past. May we come to share with them in life eternal with you and with St John the Baptist and all your saints.

Lord, your kingdom come, *your will be done.*

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song Wait for the Lord – Taize

<https://youtu.be/jn9n7hqc0CE>

Collect

O Lord Jesus Christ,
who at your first coming sent your messenger
to prepare your way before you:
grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries
may likewise so prepare and make ready your way
by turning the hearts of the disobedient

to the wisdom of the just,
that at your second coming to judge the world
we may be found an acceptable people in your sight;
for you are alive and reign with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen

(Common Worship Collect for Advent 3)

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in Heaven
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Silence

Hymn Hail to the Lord's Anointed

<https://youtu.be/EkrepBvrLI4>

Blessing

The love of the Father strengthen us,
the love of Jesus surround us,
the love of the Spirit guide us
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the
Holy Spirit be upon us all this day and for always. Amen.