

**Sunday 14 December 2025,
Third Sunday of Advent**

Collect:

God for whom we watch and wait,
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son:
give us courage to speak the truth,
to hunger for justice,
and to suffer for the cause of right,
with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for this week:

Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:4-10. 18-19; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

The Third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, signals the approach of the Incarnation with the temporary switch from solemn purple to the softer shade of rose pink. In both the first reading from Isaiah and the Gospel from Matthew we are informed as to how we shall know when God's Messiah has arrived – the suffering will be healed, good news will be given to the poor, justice and compassion will be served. These themes are echoed in the snippet we read today from Psalm 146, which relates them joyfully. In Isaiah we find the wilderness turned from being a desolate place to a supportive and nurturing environment, the ground on which a highway is built leading to the holy city. Transformation lies at the root of this passage, transformation of individuals, communities and ecosystems.

After the bubbling over of delight and wonder at God's gracious provision found in Isaiah and the Psalm, the Epistle of James takes a more sober line, counselling patience in the coming of the Lord, asking us to strengthen our hearts in the face of anxiety and to be prepared to wait. It was written for a community who believed they were living in the end times and so were expecting the imminent return of Christ. James asks them to face up to their impatience and to embrace how God is working through the continuance of history, rather than its immediate end.

The Gospel builds on last week's focus on John Baptist as the last prophet, confirming him as the one preparing the way for Jesus, while also affirming Jesus as the Messiah. The signs that Jesus is the One are to be found in his preaching of the good news to the poor and healing the sick. While John Baptist comes out of the desert to preach repentance it is Jesus who will break open the aridity of land and lives to stimulate dry places into blossoming, and it is Jesus who will become the highway stretched out to link us to God.

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts;
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit
that when your Christ comes again
we may shine as lights before his face;
who is alive and reigns now and for ever. Amen.

Readings for next week:

Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-8, 18-20; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25
Fourth Sunday of Advent