



# Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

### PREPARATION

#### Welcome and Prayer

Leader God is good  
**All All the time.**  
All the time  
**All God is good.**  
The Lord is with us  
**All Let us praise his name together.**

#### Hymn 210 Hark the glad sound

Hark, the glad sound! the Saviour  
comes,  
the Saviour promised long;  
let every heart prepare a throne,  
and every voice a song.

He comes, the prisoners to release  
in Satan's bondage held;  
the chains of sin before Him break,  
the iron fetters yield.

He comes to free the captive mind  
where evil thoughts control;  
and for the darkness of the blind,  
gives light that makes them whole.

He comes the broken heart to bind,  
the wounded soul to cure;  
and with the treasures of His grace  
to enrich the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of peace,  
Your welcome shall proclaim;  
and heaven's eternal arches ring  
with Your beloved name.

Words by Philip Doddridge  
Words in this version by Peter Horrobin  
Words in this version by Greg Leavers  
Music by Frederick George Baker

#### Lighting of the Advent Wreaths – *Light a candle in your home*

Leader God our Father, you gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age a son called John. He grew up strong in spirit, prepared the people for the coming of the Lord, and baptized them in the Jordan to wash away their sins. Help us, who have been baptized into Christ, to be ready to welcome him into our hearts, and to grow strong in faith by the power of the Spirit. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world. **Amen.**

**All** Lord Jesus, light of the world, John told the people to prepare, for you were very near. As Christmas grows closer day by day, help us to be ready to welcome you now. Amen.

Advent Reflection – Jenny Jones

Opening activity ~ What's in common?

Confession

Leader 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.

*cf 1 Corinthians 4.5*

Leader Lord Jesus, you came to gather the nations into the peace of your kingdom:  
Lord, have mercy.

**All Lord, have mercy.**

Leader You come in word and sacrament to strengthen us in holiness:  
Christ, have mercy.

**All Christ, have mercy.**

Leader You will come in glory with salvation for your people:  
Lord, have mercy.

**All Lord, have mercy**

Absolution

Leader Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All Amen.**

Collect (prayer on this day)

Leader 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

**All** in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.  
**Amen**

This time @home – Chris and Sarah Heisig, St Mark's

**Song Who breaks the power (this is amazing grace)**

Who breaks the power of sin and  
darkness?  
Whose love is mighty and so much  
stronger?  
The King of glory, the King above  
all kings.  
Who shakes the whole earth with  
holy thunder?  
Who leaves us breathless in awe and  
wonder?  
The King of glory, the King above  
all kings.

*This is amazing grace,  
this is unfailing love,  
that You would take my place,  
that You would bear my cross.  
You would lay down Your life,  
that I would be set free:  
Jesus, I sing for all that You've  
done for me,  
all that You've done for me.*

Who brings our chaos back into  
order?  
Who makes the orphan a son and  
daughter?  
The King of glory, the King above  
all kings.  
Who rules the nations with truth  
and justice,  
shines like the sun in all of its  
brilliance?  
The King of glory, the King above  
all kings.

*This is amazing grace . . .*

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,  
and worthy is the King who  
conquered the grave.

(x4)

. . . worthy, worthy, worthy.

*This is amazing grace . . .*

Josh Farro / Phil Wickham / Jeremy Riddle

**Bible readings**

*Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-end* ~ Angela Quitman, All Souls'

<sup>1</sup>The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has  
anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up  
the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release  
from darkness for the prisoners, <sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's  
favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,  
<sup>3</sup>and provide for those who grieve in Zion- to bestow on them a crown of  
beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a  
garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of  
righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.

<sup>4</sup>They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

<sup>8</sup>"For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity. In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them. <sup>9</sup>Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed."

<sup>10</sup>I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. <sup>11</sup>For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 – Rosemary McCrum, St Mark's*

<sup>16</sup>Be joyful always; <sup>17</sup>pray continually; <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. <sup>19</sup>Do not put out the Spirit's fire; <sup>20</sup>do not treat prophecies with contempt. <sup>21</sup>Test everything. Hold on to the good. <sup>22</sup>Avoid every kind of evil. <sup>23</sup>May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

Sermon    *Revd Sam Waako*

Our lectionary Bible readings for this Sunday, the third Sunday in advent, make for a rather interesting read, particularly the Isaiah reading. Whose heading reads, 'The year of the Lord's favour.'

In preparation for this sermon, on reading the title (without the text initially), I had to pause and reflect on this year in relation to all that has happened since the beginning of the pandemic. And I wondered whether I could confidently say 'This is the year of the Lord's favour! I will be honest, I found this statement quite difficult.....initially.

Most of my reflections were around the pain and sorrow that has been brought about by Covid-19, the families and friends of all those that have lost their loved ones worldwide, many of whom were not even able to be by their bedside as they passed away, let alone attend their funerals. I reflected a lot on those who have found themselves so lonely due to the fact that they were/are unable to see family and friends during this time. I thought of relationships that have faced all sorts of strain during this time, and a number that have sadly now ended. What about those who have lost jobs or still live in the fear of losing one? There are many who

are still living in fear of contracting the virus, which has led to a lot of anxiety and depression. How could this year be a year of the Lord's favour?

But then on reading the first four verses of Isaiah 61 (with a bit of research), I quickly realised that this too indeed is the year of the Lord's favour. In Luke 4.17-21, Jesus quotes these first two passages of Isaiah 61, declaring that He is the fulfilment of these words. In these words, prophesied by Isaiah, and especially in this season of Advent, we see why Jesus came to earth in the first place and why He declares this year to be the Year of the Lord's favour, despite the dark and difficult times we find ourselves living in.

Isaiah tells us that the servant (Jesus), anointed (chosen) by God came to;

- preach the good news to the poor,
- heal the broken hearted,
- announce freedom to all captives,
- pardon all prisoners,
- comfort all who mourn,
- care for the needy,

And in doing so, comes to announce the year of Lord's favour. And I think it's important to understand the word 'favour' here in context of what Jesus came to do. Humanly, when we think of favour, we think we need to earn it. Which is not the case for God. The favour referred to here is that which is graciously given, it's a free gift. In other words, favour and grace here are literally the same word. And it's free because Christ has paid for it by dying on the cross and rising again to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

Interestingly, the term 'the year of the Lord's favour' comes from an Israeli tradition initially referred to as the 'The year of the Lord's Jubilee, which referred to a traditional year (every after 50 years) the poor's debts to the wealthy were wiped away. A theme when we read the gospels, we see Jesus come back to again and again. But unlike 'the year of Jubilee' the 'year of the Lord's favour is every year.

When Christ comes, not only is our debt wiped away, Isaiah tells us from 61.3, "for those who grieve, sad, lonely, depressed... He will bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair....(and I love this one).. "they will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of

the Lord for the display of His splendour.” (I encourage you to read this last line a few times and let it sink in)

The reality we can't run away from is that it has been a difficult year in many ways, but the fact is that Jesus is still doing all the above. He still brings us good news today. He hasn't stopped and He won't stop. Jesus our perfect spotless righteousness is working now to proclaim good news and to do all that was prophesied in Isaiah. If I was to do any justice in summarising Jesus' mission to the poor, the broken hearted, the captives, the prisoners, those in mourning, the needy, the lonely and isolated, the stressed and depressed, it is the 'Message of Joy.'

Jesus in proclaiming the year of the Lord's favour, he brings gladness and joy to a people that would otherwise be wallowing in sadness and depression.

The question would now be, what is our response to all of this?



We can respond by obeying Paul's commands in 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24, where he says, "*Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in ALL circumstances... for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ.*" Our joy, prayers and thankfulness should not fluctuate with our circumstances or feelings, this I believe will help our attitude and our relationship/walk with God.

But we can also take it further by joining in with spreading the message of Joy especially in this season. As Christ's followers, our entire hope is in having our lives conformed to the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that means joining in with His mission to bring gladness and Joy to people.

Where is God calling you to bring life, gladness and joy to others especially this season?

There will be many this Christmas on their own and lonely, and one of the initiatives as a parish is to find out who these might be and arrange if possible, to at least cook a Christmas meal for them. I know others who are taking this a step further and hosting people who would otherwise be on their own on Christmas day (of course within the government guidelines).

Some people would really appreciate a simple Christmas card, this just simply says 'you care.' I'm calling on all bakers to bake a cake/cookies for

that neighbour, friend, anyone you know who would appreciate the gesture (which means the cake doesn't have to be great. . .no pressure). Maybe pick up that phone and let someone know you are thinking about them this Christmas. I could go on and on, there are many, many ways we can spread the Joy and gladness Christ brings in declaring this as the year of the Lord's favour, but I will leave the rest of the ideas to your imagination and creativity.

As we prepare to celebrate Jesus birthday at Christmas, let us be reminded once again that until the day of judgement comes, when Christ shall return on His second coming, we are living in the year of God's favour. Because God still reigns and He is still on His Throne. And so, our response is to *"Be joyful (this mostly comes from giving joy to others), pray continually and give thanks in ALL circumstances."*

### Hymn     **428 Lord for the years**

Lord, for the years Your love has  
kept and guided,  
urged and inspired us, cheered us  
on our way,  
sought us and saved us, pardoned  
and provided:  
Lord of the years, we bring our  
thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life  
which fires us,  
speaks to our hearts and sets our  
souls ablaze,  
teaches and trains, rebukes us and  
inspires us:  
Lord of the word, receive Your  
people's praise.

Lord, for our land in this our  
generation,  
spirits oppressed by pleasure,  
wealth and care:

for young and old, for  
commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear  
our prayer.

Lord, for our world where men  
disown and doubt You,  
loveless in strength, and  
comfortless in pain,  
hungry and helpless, lost indeed  
without You:  
Lord of the world, we pray that  
Christ may reign.

Lord, for ourselves; in living power  
remake us –  
self on the cross and Christ upon  
the throne,  
past put behind us, for the future  
take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ  
alone.

Words by Timothy Dudley-Smith  
Music by Michael Baughen  
Music arranged by David Iliff

### Creed

**All     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.**

Prayers ~ Mark Lempriere, St Mark's

Let us pause and draw near to God:

Ps 46 says this "Be still and know that I am  
God"

So let us put aside our cares and worries for  
a moment and draw closer to God.

As we do so we remember we are God's  
children, we are all different, but we are all  
part of the family of God!

Because we are all different each of us has different things we can thank  
God for:

I would like to ask you to think for a moment of something you can thank  
God for right now.

What are the things he has given to you, or done for you, that you can be  
grateful for?





Remembering that God gives us good things, let us pray:

(Sorry)

Father God, you have promised to be with us when we put our faith in you.

We come before you now in our weakness, repenting of our sins and seeking your good grace!

Forgive us our sins Lord and help us to live righteous lives before you. Give us your wisdom every day, to minister to those around us, for the glory of Christ and the furtherance of your kingdom here.

Lord in you mercy.....**hear our prayer.**

(Thanks)

Father God, So often we pray for the things that we want or hope for.

So in this season of Advent we thank you for loving us so much, that you sent your one and only Son to rescue us.

We thank you for your good gifts, not that we deserve them, but given to us by your grace,

through your Love, Faithfulness and Generosity,

Help us to always be joyful in your presence, comforted in the knowledge that you are looking after us.

Thank you Father!

Lord in you mercy.....**hear our prayer.**

(Offer)

A prayer of service

Almighty God, we praise you for the joy of belonging to you, and for the joy of knowing that you love all people with the same everlasting love.

You have made us so different from each other, and yet in Jesus Christ we are one community of diverse races, cultures and languages.

As you have sent your Son into the world to do your will, so give us the courage and the strength to accept his call to be his witnesses,

and to do his will that your Church here in South Woking may reflect the light of Christ to all;

through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who loves and reigns with you, and the Holy Spirit, ever one God.

Lord in your mercy.....**Hear our prayer.**

(Please)

A prayer for our world:

Father God, our world is a fragile place and we are a fragile people.

We bring before you all the countries and people affected by the Corona virus.

We thank you that not just one, but a number of vaccines have been found to fight this disease,  
and that this week the first treatments here in the UK have been administered!

We pray for your hand on the fair and efficient distribution of the vaccines and for wisdom for the authorities, doctors and health service staff world wide.

We thank you for the gift of science and pray that you will enable our lives to return to normal soon.

Lord in your mercy.....**hear our prayer.**

A prayer for those who are unwell  
Each one of us is known to God by name.  
He knows us and He loves us.

So let us think about anyone we know who is not happy at the moment, anyone who is Sad, Unwell, or Anxious and anyone who has contracted Covid-19.

Bring them to God now, quietly in your heart or out loud if you wish:

We pray for: Peter & Eileen Bliss, John Hunter, Catherine McCormack, Olive Park, Joy Storkey & Alison Cole.

The friends and family of Enid Houghton, Chris Davis and Margaret Pain.

Dear Father God of love we ask that you bless these people, dear to us, with your Holy Spirit.

Lord in your mercy...**Hear our prayer.**

For our Christian community

Holy Jesus,

by being born one of us and lying humbly in a manger,  
you show us how much God loves the world.

Let the light of your love always shine in our hearts,  
until we reach our home in Heaven,  
and see you on your throne of glory.

Lord in your mercy...**Hear our prayer**

Let us finish our time of prayer together with the Lord's Prayer, the prayer Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

**All 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**

## Energise Nativity Play and Carol Silent Night

Notices (See Notes & News)

### Hymn     **758 When the Lord in glory comes**

When the Lord in glory comes,  
not the trumpets, not the drums,  
not the anthem, not the psalm,  
not the thunder, not the calm,  
not the shout the heavens raise,  
not the chorus, not the praise,  
not the silences sublime,  
not the sounds of space and time,  
but His voice when He appears  
shall be music to my ears;  
but His voice when He appears  
shall be music to my ears.

When the Lord is seen again,  
not the glories of His reign,  
not the lightnings through the  
storm,  
not the radiance of His form,  
not His pomp and power alone,  
not the splendours of His throne,

not His robe and diadems,  
not the gold and not the gems,  
but His face upon my sight  
shall be darkness into light;  
but His face upon my sight  
shall be darkness into light.

When the Lord to human eyes  
shall bestride our narrow skies,  
not the child of humble birth,  
not the carpenter of earth,  
not the man by all denied,  
not the victim crucified,  
but the God who died to save,  
but the victor of the grave,  
He it is to whom I fall,  
Jesus Christ, my all-in-all;  
He it is to whom I fall,  
Jesus Christ, my all-in-all.

Words by Timothy Dudley-Smith  
Music by Michael Baughen  
Music arranged by David G Wilson

**Leader**     Our Lord says, I am coming soon.  
**All**         **Amen. Come Lord Jesus.**

**Leader**     Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you,  
scatter the darkness from before your path,  
and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and  
the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you now and for evermore.  
**All**         **Amen.**

### Dismissal

**Leader**     As we await our coming Saviour,  
go in the peace of Christ.  
**All**         **Thanks be to God.**

*Advent*  
A Season of Hope  
& Expectation