



Sunday 7th December 2025

The Second Sunday of Advent

Gospel Reading

Matthew 3.1-12

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,

make his paths straight."

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

'I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

Other Readings: Isaiah 11.1-10 Psalm 72.1-7,18,19 Romans 15.4-13

Homily

St John the Baptist gets a good outing at this time of year – he gets his own Sunday next week, but today we have this passage from St Matthew's Gospel to remind us of the Prophets.

The description used here for John is so similar to that of Elijah. In 2 Kings 1:7–8, when Ahaziah the king is lying injured, he sends messengers to the pagan god Baal-zebub to ask whether he will live or die. A man confronts them on the way. "Is there no God in Israel?" the man says. Why are you turning to Baal-zebub? This is the message you shall take to the king:

“Therefore you shall surely die.” The king asks them what sort of man he was. “A hairy man,” they say, “with a leather belt around his waist.” “It is Elijah the Tishbite,” the king says.

Then, here in today’s Gospel reading from Matthew, in reference to John, we’re told, “His clothing was camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist.” The point is made loud and clear: John is like Elijah, who rebukes the king for forgetting God. John is like Elijah, who, in Jewish expectation at the time of Jesus, would come again when the reign of God was at hand.

By calling to mind Elijah, Matthew, using a kind of shorthand, is saying to the hearers of the Gospel that this is a time again where people are far from God, failing to seek Him out for their care and needs, looking elsewhere in the world to fulfil their prayers and wants and desires.

As we approach the end of 2025, one might ask, ‘What has changed?’ If you visited your local town or city today, you’d be forgiven for believing Christmas was already here. There are lights everywhere, giant Father Christmas’, the shops are full of pigs-in-blankets, turkey, chocolate, gifts - much of which has been around us since September. Here we are, seeking to create the magic of Christmas for our families and friends, and yet failing to see what the season is really all about. Rather than looking for the Christ-child to answer our needs, we spend, spend, spend in the hope that *things* will bring fulfilment.

Many do look forward to the joy of Christmas, with all its trappings, revelling in the warmth and happiness that surrounds this day. There’s nothing wrong in that. But we have lost something amid the frenzy of the season. Where, except in church during the four weeks of Advent, so we experience the anticipation in the waiting which is so very important?

Advent takes us through the story of those who came before Jesus – The Patriarchs, the Prophets, John the Baptist, Mary. These are the people who set the stage and paved the way for Jesus to come into the world. Remembering the story before Jesus is as important as celebrating his birth. It is a reminder that throughout history, human beings have doubted God, have not fully trusted God, and believed they could do things without God.

The stories we are hearing in these coming weeks in expectation of the Christ-child remind us that, more than ever, we must remember God, his central place in our lives, and learn to rely on God. Like John, we should put our full trust in God, and know that we are held in His unconditional love. We hear of the obedience and trust that Abraham and Sarah, Elijah and Elisha, John the Baptist, and Mary the mother of Jesus put in God by saying yes to him. And this is the time, when we hear of their faithfulness, to remember that we are asked to do the same.

As we continue to prepare for the coming of the Christ-child, pray that you may be like the prophets – remembering God’s place in your life, proclaiming the Good News, and trusting fully in Him.

Conversation Questions

1. How can we prepare for the coming of Christ into our hearts this season?
2. What will your prayer be for the world as we move towards Christmas?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you?
What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power
and come among us,
and with great might succour us;
that whereas, through our sins and wickedness
we are grievously hindered
in running the race that is set before us,
your bountiful grace and mercy
may speedily help and deliver us;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit,
be honour and glory, now and for ever.*

(or)

*Almighty God,
purify our hearts and minds,
that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as
judge and saviour
we may be ready to receive him,
who is our Lord and our God.*

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, material from which is incorporated in this service paper, is copyright © The Archbishops' Council, 2000. Scripture passage from the New Revised Standard Version (Anglicised) copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.