



# ~AT HOME WORSHIP~

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Theme: The great leveller



## Preparation

Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the crooked will be made straight,  
and the rough ways be made smooth.  
All people shall see the salvation of God,  
and we come now to worship.

You may have chosen to light a candle at home on each Sunday of Advent. If you have, this prayer could be used as you light it.

As we light this Advent candle,  
may its flame be a light that shines for all to see –  
a sign that Jesus is for all.  
May we know God's presence and power as we gather in the name of Jesus,  
who is the light of the world.  
Amen.

## Hymn/Song: Beauty for Brokenness

<https://youtu.be/mcGfPkzksS8>

Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair  
Lord, in your suffering, this is our prayer.  
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace,  
Sunrise to sunset, Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills  
Work for the craftsman, trade for their skills.  
Land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak.  
Voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak

### Chorus

*God of the poor, friend of the weak,  
Give us compassion we pray.  
Melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain.  
Come, change our love from a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear  
Cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share.  
Peace to the killing-fields, scorched earth to green  
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.  
*Chorus*

Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams  
Plundered and poisoned, our future, our dreams.  
Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed.  
Make us content with the thing that we need.  
*Chorus*

Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame  
Until your justice burns brightly again.  
Until the nations learn of your ways  
Seek your salvation and bring you their praise.  
*Chorus*

## Opening Prayer

We come to praise you, Lord, God of Israel and all the nations.  
We come to you who set your people free.  
We come to you who guides us into the way of peace.  
We come to you as we journey through Advent  
and prepare to welcome, once again, the Christ child.  
Amen.

## Prayer for the Day

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.

## Saying Sorry

There are signs of God and we are blind to them,  
there are voices that cry out and we close our ears to them.  
There are signs of people's need and we do not see them,  
and cries of those in pain and we pass them by.

There are signs of God's kingdom to be seen,  
and the voice of the Holy Spirit to be heard:  
O God, forgive us when we ignore you  
and ignore our neighbours, near and far. Amen.

*Take a moment to pause and reflect on the words above and let the voice of God speak softly to you.*

God spoke through Zechariah, saying, 'Tell the people:  
they will be saved by the forgiveness of their sins.'  
God's promises endure for ever and ever;  
so, let us be assured, our sins are forgiven.  
Amen.

## BIBLE READING



## Luke 3:1-6

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

**3** In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— <sup>2</sup> during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>4</sup> As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.  
<sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled in,  
every mountain and hill made low.  
The crooked roads shall become straight,  
the rough ways smooth.  
<sup>6</sup> And all people will see God’s salvation.”

## REFLECTION TIME



### Thought for the Day taken from the Roots publication

#### Children may choose to use the Activity Sheet

This week’s Gospel story begins in a geographically low place: the wilderness region around the River Jordan. Jesus’ ministry begins in this low place (though that is in the next part of Luke chapter 3). Jesus’ ministry also began in a socially low place – not in some highly magnificent palace, suitable for one born to be king or in a grand temple, a home suitable perhaps for the Son of God. It began in a stable.

The wilderness and a stable – how different to the ways of the world: where status is so important, where the place you went to school, or university – if you went to university – is considered so important by some; where wanting to become a celebrity is the life goal of significant numbers of people. Society looks at these things, and says: the grander, the higher, the better! And if you don’t have, or can’t achieve these things, you lose out.

But John, and Jesus, say ‘No.’ That is not the way. The way – the way of the Lord – takes a different path. The way of the Lord – straight, level and smooth – has no obstacles in the way, no hurdles that must be overcome; no ‘grander, higher, better’ to keep people out.

To those who would travel this way, the message couldn’t be plainer: repent and be baptized by water and the Holy Spirit and follow Jesus. To those who have already taken this step: we know that what sounds simple is in fact a lifelong process of becoming more Christ-like, or – to use Malachi’s words – of purifying experiences. But the challenge of today’s Bible readings is that we must do nothing – nothing at all – that might obscure the message that Jesus is for all, or that makes the way of the Lord anything other than straight, level and smooth for those who want to travel it with us.



### **Family Song - Every Step (Nick & Becky Drake)**

[https://youtu.be/nZBhKp5\\_HwE](https://youtu.be/nZBhKp5_HwE)

## Reflection Song before Prayers

### Purify my heart

<https://youtu.be/SQclw7Ptxwc>

Purify my heart,  
let me be as gold and precious silver.  
Purify my heart,  
let me be as gold, pure gold.

*Chorus*  
*Refiner's fire,*  
*My heart's one desire is to be...holy;*  
*Set apart for You, Lord.*  
*I choose to be...holy;*  
*Set apart for You, my Master,*  
*Ready to do Your will.*

Purify my heart  
cleanse me from within  
and make me holy,  
Purify my heart,  
Cleanse me from my sin, deep within.  
*Chorus (x2)*

Brian Doerksen

## Time for Prayer

Read the words slowly and carefully. Pause at the end of each line and pray for each group of people. If you know of specific organisations or individuals, name them or offer the silence to God as prayer for them instead.

### Let us pray

In the desert John spoke his words of judgement,  
challenging people to change, to repent, to be baptised with water.  
We remember today:  
those who hear only words of judgement;  
those struggling in a desert of despair;  
those who are afraid for their future;  
those who feel worthless and unloved;  
those who are isolated and lonely.

By the lake and in the marketplace Jesus spoke his words of invitation,  
challenging people to follow him,  
transforming them with his spirit of love.  
We remember today:  
those who speak words of encouragement;  
those who walk with the despairing;  
those who give hope to the fearful;  
those who offer friendship to the unloved;  
those who stand alongside the lonely.

We pray for those who find it difficult to say sorry,  
and those who find forgiveness too difficult.  
We give thanks for John the Baptist  
who prepared the way for something new to happen,  
bridging the gap between old and new,  
judgement and forgiveness.

**Amen.**

## 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.

## Hymn/Song – Great is thy faithfulness

<https://youtu.be/r4ox4es1jo8>

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not  
As thou has been Thou forever wilt be.

*Chorus*

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided –  
Great is Thy faithfulness; Lord, unto me!*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

*Chorus*

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

*Chorus*

## Closing Prayer

May the road we travel be smooth and straight,  
every rut filled in, every bump smoothed out,  
any diversions easy to navigate,  
any obstacles easy to manoeuvre round.  
May good companions share our journey,  
and we be voices for good in the world,  
a sign of Jesus' love for all.  
We pray in Jesus' name.  
Amen.

## Dismissal

Prepare your words carefully and speak kindly to all.  
Prepare your hearts faithfully and be open to all.  
And may that God of the desert draw you to himself,  
day by day.  
Amen.

God bless you now and always



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