**At Home**

**Sunday 12th of December 2021**

**This Sunday’s theme**

**“What then, should we do!”**

Welcome and Notices (Duty Leader)

In our worship today on this 3rd Sunday of Advent let us remember that the love of God for his people and for his church knows no limits. The Psalmist talks of God’s love reaching up to the heavens and his justice to the depth of the ocean, and yet he blesses us as individuals with the gifts of his Spirit so that his Church, his people might be a light in this place, to his glory.

[All I once held dear - Robin Mark - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxpPIa-BskY)

**All I once held dear, built my life upon**  
All this world reveres and wars to own  
All I once thought gain I have counted loss  
Spent and worthless now, compared to this

Knowing You, Jesus  
Knowing You  
There is no greater thing  
You're my all, You're the best  
You're my joy, my righteousness  
And I love You, Lord

Now my heart's desire is to know You more  
To be found in You and known as Yours  
To possess by faith what I could not earn  
All-surpassing gift of righteousness

Knowing ….

Oh, to know the power of Your risen life  
And to know You in Your sufferings  
To become like You in Your death, my Lord  
So with You to live and never die

Knowing …

[Our God is an Awesome God with Lyrics - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PP9BjKnDaFk)

**Our God is an awesome God**  
He reigns from heaven above  
With wisdom, power, and love  
Our God is an awesome God

Father God, we bring our offering of worship and with it the service of our lives through this coming week. May we go from this place knowing that we have met with you and been blessed by your Spirit, to live and work to your glory. Amen

Living God whose Word became flesh in Jesus and whose Spirit of Truth speaks into our hearts all honour and glory and worship belong to you. As our praises pronounce your wonder may our lives overflow with love, that our words and deeds might tell of your goodness and declare your infinite grace. **Amen**.

Call to Confession

Although God is the source of our joy,  
our sin often hinders our joy and the joy of others.  
Let us confess our sins before God and one another.

Confession

**Gracious God,  
it was with joy that you brought us into being.  
You created the world and called it good.  
And yet we have done so much to quell that goodness:  
we have fought with one another and failed to live in peace;  
we have shut out the stranger and disparaged the immigrant;  
we have ignored the needy and judged the poor;  
we have fallen short of your command to be the Beloved Community.  
Forgive us, Merciful God, and bring us back to the joy we find in you.  
This we pray in your holy name. Amen.**

Absolution

Gracious God with gratitude and gladness we hear your promise of liberation: that in Christ we are forgiven and set free, and restored to serve you. Thanks be to you, Living God! **Amen.**

**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.**

**Luke 3: 7**John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8**Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. **9**The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

**10**“What should we do then?” the crowd asked. **11**John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.” **12**Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?” **13**“Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.

**14**Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?” He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.” **15**The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. **16**John answered them all, “I baptize you with[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%203:7-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25042a)] water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%203:7-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25042b)] the Holy Spirit and fire. **17**His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” **18**And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

**Reflection**

‘What then, should we do?’ This phrase appears three times in the Gospel reading. For each of the people who ask, the answer is different, because it is a contextual question. What we should do depends on who we are, what we spend our days doing, and what our responsibilities may be. For example:

* the tax collector should collect only the correct amount of tax;
* the soldier should do his duty but must not extort.

There are many other examples in Luke’s Gospel – it is a recurring question.

But, though the specifics will and should vary, the response that is called for is always down to earth and practical, and usually centres on the generous sharing of resources. And underlying it is a call for an ethic and an attitude of contentment, a call to be content with ‘enough’ – one good coat, enough food, the legitimate amount of tax revenue and sufficient wages. And we shouldn’t delude ourselves – ‘enough’ may be less than we are used to having!

For each of us, then, what we should do to reflect Christ’s presence in our lives will be different. It’s easy to think we do our bit because we raise money for whichever charity is our personal or church’s focus, but Jesus’ challenge here goes deeper than that. It is personal and individual. He says that it is not enough to pay taxes, or give to church or charity. The action must be matched by personal authenticity. Generosity is more than a few generous acts, it is a way of living.

What then should we do? How might we bear good fruit? With whom might we share our coat? In our workplaces, in our daily encounters whatever their context, are those we share time with able to discern that we are followers of ‘The Way’ by our actions? How so? And if not, why not?

[O Thou Who Camest from Above (Tune: Hereford - 4vv) [with lyrics for congregations] - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ6pmSEzJ5A)

**O Thou Who camest from above,**

The pure celestial fire to impart,  
Kindle a flame of sacred love  
On the mean altar of my heart.

There let it for Thy glory burn  
With inextinguishable blaze,  
And trembling to its source return,  
In humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
To work and speak and think for Thee;  
Still let me guard the holy fire,  
And still stir up Thy gift in me.

Ready for all Thy perfect will,  
My acts of faith and love repeat,  
'Til death Thy endless mercies seal,  
And make my sacrifice complete.

**Intercessions**

The world says, ‘You can never have enough money’; but we say,  
**‘Let’s share. Let’s dare to be different.’**  
The world says, ‘You can never have too many clothes’; but we say,  
**‘Let’s share. Let’s dare to be different.’**  
The world says, ‘Enough is never really enough’; but we say,  
**‘Let’s share. Let’s dare to be different.’**  
In Jesus’ name,  
**‘Let’s share. Let’s dare to be different.’  
Amen.**

Let us pray to God, saying:  
God of Joy, **draw near to us.**  
  
God of Humanity,  
this past week was the observation of Human Rights Day,  
a day set aside by the United Nations in 1948, 73 years ago this week,  
to remind us of the places in the world where human rights are ignored.  
Our denomination has a historic commitment to human rights.  
Help us, Gracious God, to proclaim your gospel that tells us  
“all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”  
God of Joy, **draw near to us.**  
  
God of Compassion,  
your scripture tells us today  
that those of us with much have much to give in your name. Luke 3:11  
Where those of us have too much,  
help us have generous hearts to give to those who have too little.  
In this season of expectation,  
help us bear the good fruit that you call us to bear. Luke 3:9  
God of Joy, **draw near to us.**  
  
God of Hope,  
we pray that you will make joy known in difficult places this season:  
in places of warfare,  
in places of pain,  
in places of despair,  
in places of sickness,  
in places of hunger,  
in places of hopelessness.  
Help us share the joy we find in you!  
God of Joy, **draw near to us.**  
  
God of Harmony,  
this year has seen so much division.  
Help us, in this season of generosity and compassion,  
to draw near to one another.  
When fear reigns, we tend to circle our wagons and shut others out.  
But when hope reigns, we let down our guard  
and open ourselves up to the possibility of love and creation.  
Help us draw near to one another.  
God of Joy, **draw near to us.**  
  
God of Healing,  
we pray that you would lift up those among you that need joy,  
those we lift up before you silently…  
God of Joy, **draw near to us.**

**Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen

[GORTON MONASTERY-HILLS OF NORTH REJOICE - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FMQLLlbPh4)

**Hills of the north, rejoice**,  
echoing songs arise,  
hail with united voice  
him who made earth and skies:  
he comes in righteousness and love,  
he brings salvation from above.

Isles of the southern seas,  
sing to the list'ning earth,  
carry on ev'ry breeze  
hope of a world's new birth:  
in Christ shall all be made anew,  
his word is sure, his promise true.

Lands of the east, arise,  
he is your brightest morn,  
greet him with joyous eyes,  
praise shall his path adorn:  
the God whom you have longed to know  
in Christ draws near, and calls you now.

Shores of the utmost west,  
lands of the setting sun,  
welcome the heav'nly guest  
in whom the dawn has come:  
he brings a never-ending light  
who triumphed o'er our darkest night.

Shout, as you journey on,  
songs be in ev'ry mouth,  
lo, from the north they come,  
from east and west and south:  
in Jesus all shall find their rest,  
in him the longing earth be blest.

**Lord, help us to go into the world in peace;  
to be of good courage;  
to hold fast to that which is good;  
to strengthen the fainthearted;  
to support the weak;  
to honour everyone;  
and to love and serve the Lord.  
Be within us and among us,  
and remain with us always.  
Amen.**

**The Blessing**