

Welcome to service on this 2nd Sunday of advent

We light our next **Advent candle** and pray:

God our Father, you spoke to the prophets of old of a Saviour who would bring peace; you helped them to spread the joyful message of his coming kingdom. Help us as we prepare to celebrate his birth, to share with those around us the good news of your power and love, we ask this through Jesus Christ, the Light who is coming into the world
Amen

Song: Child in a manger

by Mary MacDonald translated by Lachlan MacBean

1. Child in a manger, infant of Mary; outcast and stranger, Lord of all;
Child who inherits all our transgressions, all our demerits on him fall
2. Once the most holy child of salvation gently and lowly lived below;
now as our glorious mighty Redeemer, see him victorious o'er each foe.
3. Prophets foretold him, infant of wonder; angels beheld him on his throne;
Worthy our Saviour of all their praises; happy for ever are his own.

Reading Luke 3:1-6

1 ¶ *Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, 2 while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.*

3 *And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.*

5 *Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth;*

6 *And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."*

In the Church's 'pattern of life' we are in the time called Advent (literally the coming of the King) So....

to prepare people for this, God throughout history gave them and us signposts - and from Advent to Christmas we look at these

-Advent1 (last Sunday) reminds us of the Patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the first ones called to be God's family on earth - God gave promises to these *fathers and mother of faith*, for A Nation, a Land and A Seed (a future King and Saviour)

- Today in Advent2 we think about The Prophets (God's spokesmen who spoke God's word for then, now, and the days to come)

There are 4 Major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, & Daniel - all of whom spoke of the coming of the God/Man, the Saviour, the Eternal King

- Isaiah in 7:4 foretold *A virgin shall be with child... and he shall be called Emmanuel, God with us*

Does that sound familiar?

- Jeremiah foretold a coming *Covenant Maker* 31:31

- Ezekiel foretold God's supernatural *Glory* coming to earth when dry bones will live in chapters 37 & 43

- Daniel, in ch7:13, foretold that the Son of Man would come and in 'the end of time' come in the clouds to be King for ever.

Four Major Prophets said *Watch out, God is coming!*

But also there were 12 Minor prophets - not minor in position but in the size of the books they wrote.

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and the last of these in the Old testament.

Our 2nd **reading** comes from Malachi chapter 3:1-4

"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me; and the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts, and who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the LORD, as in the days of old, as in former years.

God, through Malachi, says two things:

Someone is coming to be my messenger (with a small 'm') someone to get people ready; and this was John the Baptizer (who we remember next week)

Luke 3 tells us that John would *Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth.*

But John, the messenger with a small 'm', his primary job was to point to *THE Messenger* (with a capital M) *the messenger of the Covenant* - The LORD Jesus (God himself)

Jesus the LORD 'is called The Refiner, the purifier, the Saviour; and *all flesh shall see (in Him) the salvation of God* (or as John said, pointing to Jesus' *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*

Christ's coming would not be a secret things, not a hidden thing, not an unexpected things.

The prophets together pointed to a landmark event that would become the crux, the focus, the turning point, of history - Christ's 1st and 2nd coming

Apparently I've surprised a few people by saying I believe that Jesus is coming back- that he is coming again as King

of Kings & Lord of lords -

Not to save (he did that the 1st time by dying on the cross to pay for our forgiveness) but to gather his own together and take them home to Heaven

What God promises and prophecies in the Bible began to happen at Christ's 1st coming and will culminate in his 2nd coming

The signs of his return ecologically, environmentally medically, Socially, Morally, Spiritually. (things foretold in the Bible as signs of his return in the Old Testament & New Testament) are all around us, and so today we are invited to..... *get ready*

Prayers of confession and intercession

We get ready for Jesus, by getting right with Jesus; by confessing our faults and failings and receiving Christ's forgiveness and saying **Lord have mercy**

Holy Father, forgive us our faults and shortcoming, our broken promises and our lack of love for you, our neighbour, and those afar off.

Lord have mercy **Lord Have mercy**

We praise you for the promise of forgiveness that you give us through Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for us on the cross, and receive your pardon now

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

We pray for the world spoilt by our selfishness, carelessness and misuse of the environment, and pray for who challenge us to change

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

We pray for those caught up in war and violence, internationally, nationally, and domestically; for those who suffer loss, injury and death, and for those who seek to alleviate their pain.

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

We pray give wisdom to those who deal with the refugee problem at its source and outcome

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

We pray for all who suffer physically, mentally, and emotionally, through sickness, stress and fear. God, our counselor and comforter, be with those who serve in the NHS, and caring professions

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

We pray for your church to be a prophetic voice to their countries, communities and churches. Give all leaders the courage to speak truth to power, and grace to oppression; to preach your unchanging Word rather than man's fluctuating wisdom

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

We praise you for the hope we have that the One who came to be the Saviour of the world at that first Christmas is coming again as King to judge justly, to right all wrongs, and to reign in peace.

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

Even so Come Lord Jesus, come. **Amen**

Finally we join our prayers together with the Christian family world-wide, saying:

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 them that 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

Music: Every valley shall be exalted *A part from George Fredrick Handel's Messiah*

Prayer and Blessing

Lord Jesus Christ, Light of the world, the prophets said you would bring peace, and save your people in trouble.

Give us peace in our hearts this Christmastide, and show all the world God's love

and may the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, the Father) and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us and those for whom we pray, this Christmastide, and for evermore. **Amen**

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England,

material which is included in this service is copyright of The Archbishop's Council (2000) and songs permitted by CCLI Music licence 2370586