

Worship for Second Sunday of Advent (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

On this 2nd Sunday in Advent, we welcome all and thank those taking part and those enabling the service to be shown online. Special thanks go to Rev Jemima Strain for the sermon.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Advent preparation is the understanding of the true meaning of Christ bringing Peace to our hearts. It has to begin with you and me and all of us as individuals.

Peace is not a once and for all it is new, and it is now, and it is for us to know again.

Peace will come and let it begin with you and me.

Now let us worship God as we sing: 'Make way, make way, for Christ the King in splendour arrives'. It challenges us to ask are we getting ready to make way to welcome Christ into our hearts during this Advent time. Let us sing from Singing the Faith 264

Hymn: StF 264 – Make way, make way for Christ the King

- 1. Make way, make way, for Christ the King in splendour arrives;
fling wide the gates and welcome him into your lives.**
*Make way (Make way), make way (make way),
for the King of kings (for the King of kings);
make way (make way), make way (make*

*way),
and let his Kingdom in.*

- 2. He comes the broken hearts to heal,
the prisoners to free;
the deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance,
the blind shall see.**
*Make way (Make way), make way (make way),
for the King of kings (for the King of kings);
make way (make way), make way (make way),
and let his Kingdom in.*
- 3. And those who mourn with heavy hearts,
who weep and sigh,
with laughter, joy and royal crown
he'll beautify.**
*Make way (Make way), make way (make way),
for the King of kings (for the King of kings);
make way (make way), make way (make way),
and let his Kingdom in.*
- 4. We call you now to worship him
as Lord of all,
to have no gods before him,
their thrones must fall!**
*Make way (Make way), make way (make way),
for the King of kings (for the King of kings);
make way (make way), make way (make*

**way),
and let his Kingdom in.**

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Prayers of Adoration and confession

Loving God in our worship, we seek to be ready to meet with you. You are all we need and you give us so much. For every blessing we praise your name. You prepared your people for your coming and gave your word to us through your prophets. Especially today as we think and hear about John the Baptist. We bring ourselves before you, Lord, just as we are, as we would walk with you during this waiting time until we once again celebrate your birth. May we know God's presence and power, as we gather together today in the name of Jesus, who is the light of the world. Amen.

As we come before God, we ask his forgiveness for missed opportunities. For the things we have done and the things we have not done. It is so easy to clutter up our lives and lose sight of God's Kingdom and what is important. We pray that our ears and eyes will be clear so that we may hear God's call and become involved in the work he has for us.

Thank you that you forgive our failings Lord, and assure us of the great hope that is ours through the death and resurrection of your son Jesus Christ.

Amen

We sing again from Singing the Faith 508 'Purify my heart, Cleanse me from within and make me holy'.

Hymn: StF 508 – Purify my heart

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

**let me be as gold,
pure gold.**

***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.***

**2. Purify my heart,
cleanse me from within
and make me holy.
Purify my heart,
cleanse me from my sin,
deep within.**

***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.***

Brian Doerksen (b. 1965)

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Baruch 5: 1-9 (NRSVA)

^{5:1}Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem,
and put on for ever the beauty of the glory from God.

²Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God;

put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting;

³for God will show your splendour everywhere under heaven.

⁴For God will give you evermore the name, 'Righteous Peace, Godly Glory'.

⁵Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height;
look towards the east,
and see your children gathered from west and east
at the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing that God has remembered them.
⁶For they went out from you on foot,
led away by their enemies;
but God will bring them back to you,
carried in glory, as on a royal throne.
⁷For God has ordered that every high mountain
and the everlasting hills be made low
and the valleys filled up, to make level ground,
so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of
God.

⁸The woods and every fragrant tree
have shaded Israel at God's command.
⁹For God will lead Israel with joy,
in the light of his glory,
with the mercy and righteousness that come
from him.

Canticle (Benedictus) Luke 1:68-79 (NRSVA)

⁶⁸'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favourably on his people and
redeemed them.
⁶⁹He has raised up a mighty saviour for us
in the house of his servant David,
⁷⁰as he spoke through the mouth of his holy
prophets from of old,
⁷¹ that we would be saved from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us.
⁷²Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our
ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
⁷³the oath that he swore to our ancestor
Abraham,
to grant us ⁷⁴that we, being rescued from the
hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and
righteousness

before him all our days.
⁷⁶And you, child, will be called the prophet of the
Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his
ways,
⁷⁷to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
⁷⁸By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in
the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

Philippians 1:3-11 (NRSVA)

Paul's Prayer for the Philippians

³I thank my God every time I remember you,
⁴constantly praying with joy in every one of my
prayers for all of you, ⁵because of your sharing in
the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶I am
confident of this, that the one who began a good
work among you will bring it to completion by
the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷It is right for me to think
this way about all of you, because you hold me in
your heart, for all of you share in God's grace
with me, both in my imprisonment and in the
defence and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸For
God is my witness, how I long for all of you with
the compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹And this is my
prayer, that your love may overflow more and
more with knowledge and full insight ¹⁰to help
you to determine what is best, so that on the day
of Christ you may be pure and blameless,
¹¹having produced the harvest of righteousness
that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and
praise of God.

Luke 3:1-6 (NRSVA)

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

^{3:1}In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor
Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of

Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, ²during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ⁴as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

⁵Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,

and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;

⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Sermon

Silence and solitude.

One of the gifts that I was given during Sabbatical was the gift of silence for 5 days!

I often wrestle with the influences of the secular culture and even our religious subcultures that in overt or subtle ways devalue non-productive times for 'being' rather than 'doing'. The busier the better. The topic of busyness often highlights in everyday life. Conversations at social gatherings often touch upon hectic schedules, and people of all ages explain that they have been busy.

In our society we are so used to living with noise: families, television, traffic, machines, work colleagues, shops, music, phones, social media, news. We live in the age of information. And even when they are all quiet there's the busyness of my emotions, thoughts and the

inner wrestlings that I have not been able to control.

A book that I had picked up at the beginning of my Sabbatical called 'An Invitation to Solitude and Silence' by Ruth Haley Barton. In this book, Ruth describes herself 'like a jar of river water all shaken up. What you need is to sit still long enough that the sediment can settle and the water can become clear.'

I can't avoid the realization that I too am this jar of shaken up water and the jar was full of busyness, the emotions, the thoughts, the inner wrestlings that I had not been able to control. An invitation to be still and know, beyond my addiction to noise, words, people and performance-orientated activity.

I decided I would use this opportunity of Sabbatical to go on a silent retreat to St Bueno's in North Wales. God's invitation to move beyond words into solitude and silence.

Solitude eventually offers a quiet gift of grace, a gift that comes whenever we are able to face ourselves honestly: the gift of acceptance, of compassion, for who we are as we are. As we allow ourselves to be known in solitude, we discover that we are known by love. Beyond the pain of self-discovery there is a love that does not condemn us but calls us to itself. This love reaches us as we are.

Parker Palmer

One of the special places on that retreat were the most amazing sunrises and sunsets. Half way up the mountain, overlooking the beautiful countryside horizon, with the hills and valleys and the sea in the distance. The quiet place of contemplating the colours and the changing clouds and the gloriousness to behold.

One thing I really appreciate about the sunrise each day is the gentleness of how the sun rises. It's not like a switch is flipped and the full light of day floods our homes, startling us out of our sleep. The sun rises slowly, peacefully, urging us to have hope for this new day.

As I read the scripture for today, I am mindful that Zechariah has been silent and it's with these words recorded in Luke 1: 68-79 how he chooses to break the silence. If you remember the story, the elderly Zechariah couldn't speak until John was born because he doubted the angel's announcement that he and his likewise elderly wife Elizabeth would have a child.

I wonder if he too had found the time to watch and contemplate. I'd always thought it was an act of punishment, but now I wonder if it was a gift after-all.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. [Luke 1:76-79 \(NRSV\)](#)

Maybe you've had a special sunrise experience, too. Sunrise is a familiar metaphor, one often used to show the start of something new. In the Bible, the priest Zechariah recognized a "sunrise" moment when his son, John the Baptist, was born.

When John was born, Zechariah prophesied about this child's role in making people ready for the "mighty saviour" Jesus, who would come through King David's descendants.

John the Baptist would make the people ready for the glory of God with us through Jesus' arrival. God showed his mercy by gently moving people toward the possibility that true worship could be more than following the legalistic customs of the day.

Just as the sunrise begins slowly, with just a glimmer, so John the Baptist was that glimmer of God's mercy and peace to those who were without hope, sitting "***in darkness and in the shadow of death.***"

I find it a challenge to protect space for these times apart to stop and watch and listen to the still small voice. Especially in the commercialised busyness of Christmas. But I don't want to be so busy that I don't have moments to stop, pause and recognise the ever-loving presence of God. Life is busy and complicated and loud for many of us.

Beyond words. If I could encourage us to do one thing this week during Advent, it would be to find space and protect it to allow God to come and do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

The next time you're awake for a sunrise, think of God's gentle mercy that moves all of us toward the way of peace and hope. Watch with patience for that glimmer of light on the horizon, see the pinks and yellows grow, and notice how the birds lift their morning songs of praise.

As we enter into this new week, may you take time to pause to be still; Let us remember the hope of Jesus' ultimate return and recognize God's gentle, peaceful guidance each day. Amen.

THE RESPONSE

Thanksgiving prayer

We come with thanksgiving, for the beauty of this day, for the wonder of life and for the fellowship we share.

Thank you for the freedom we have, to come before you and worship, and for the Gospel message of this advent season.

So we rejoice, with the world wide church, as we journey through Advent in worship and in faith. Make us ready for the coming of our Lord.

Amen.

We sing again this time from Mission Praise and one that may not be quite so familiar. 'Restore O Lord, the honour of your name' It's number 579 and written by Graham Kendrick.

Hymn: Mission Praise 579 – Restore O Lord

- 1. Restore, O Lord,
the honour of Your name!
In works of sovereign power
come shake the earth again,
that men may see,
and come with reverent fear
to the Living God,
whose Kingdom shall outlast the years.**
- 2. Restore, O Lord,
in all the earth Your fame,
and in our time revive
the Church that bears Your name,
and in Your anger,
Lord, remember mercy,
O Living Go,
whose mercy shall outlast the years.**
- 3. Bend us, O Lord,
where we are hard and cold,
in Your refiners fire;
come purify the gold:
though suffering comes,**

**and evil crouches near,
still our Living God
is reigning, He is reigning here.**

Graham Kendrick & Chris Rolinson

Prayers of intercession

Loving God, we pray that your name will be restored and honoured in readiness for the coming of Jesus. May we too, be properly prepared for Christ in our lives.

We pray for the world to be restored and remember the situations where persecution and discrimination of all kinds are occurring. We believe in your power to change the world. Help us to speak out about injustice. Let your light shine and bring hope to all who are in need.

We pray for our community and our country. Bless those who work tirelessly for the good of others; for those who are leaders both locally and nationally making decisions which affect us all. Help us to build a more caring and just society.

We pray for all the churches in this circuit and their congregations.

Bless those who minister to us and those who care.

We pray for those in need and those close to us. For the many who struggle not knowing where to turn and those who are weak and frail and beset by worries and troubles.

We lift to you Lord all who are ill and ask that you will hold them and give them comfort and peace.

In a few moments of silence we name before you those known to us.

Finally, we pray for ourselves as we prepare for the coming of Jesus.

May the peace of Christ bless us,

may the love of Christ work through us,
may the light of Christ shine in the darkest
places.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

We join together as we say the 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

The Offering & prayer

Heavenly Father, accept the gifts we offer and
with them our lives. May we work with you to
bring in your Kingdom here on earth.

Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

We join to sing our final hymn from Singing the
Faith 51 Great is thy faithfulness, O God my
father, there is no shadow of turning with thee.'
This hymn reminds us of God's faithfulness in all
circumstances.

Hymn: StF 51 – Great is thy faithfulness

**1. 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 hast been thou for ever wilt be:**

***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.

**2. 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:**

***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.

**3. 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!**

***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.

Thomas O. Chisholm (1866–1960)

Prayer & blessing

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

We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

The blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

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StF 51 – Great is thy faithfulness

Thomas O. Chisholm (1866–1960)

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StF 264 – Make way, make way for Christ the King

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

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StF 508 – Purify my heart

Brian Doerksen (b. 1965)

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Mission Praise 579 – Restore O Lord

Graham Kendrick & Chris Rolinson

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NRSV & NRSVA

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