

**The Rectorial Benefice of the East Vale
Morning Prayer
Sunday 6th December, 2020 | Advent 2**

Hymn

**Long ago, prophets knew
Christ would come, born a Jew.
Come to make all things new;
bear his People's burden,
freely love and pardon.**

Refrain:

**Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!
Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!
When he comes, when he comes,
who will make him welcome?**

**God in time, God in man,
this is God's timeless plan:
He will come, as a man,
born himself of woman,
God divinely human. [Refrain]**

**Mary, hail! though afraid,
she believed, she obeyed.
In her womb God is laid;
till the time expected
nurtured and protected. [Refrain]**

**Journey ends! where afar
Bethlem shines, like a star,
stable door stands ajar.
Unborn Son of Mary,
Saviour, do not tarry!**

**Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!
sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!
Jesus comes! Jesus comes!
We will make him welcome!**

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

Advent 2: The Prophets

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever! Of old, you spoke by the mouth of your prophets but in our days you speak through your Son whom you have appointed the heir in all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgement; for you are our light and our salvation.

Blessed be God for ever.

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.**

**Lord Jesus, Light of the world,
The prophets said you would bring peace
And save your people in trouble.
Give peace in our hearts at Christmastide
And show all the world God's love.**

The Collect

Father in heaven, who sent your Son to redeem the world and will send him again to be our judge: give us grace so to imitate him in the humility and purity of his first coming that, when he comes again, we may be ready to greet him with joyful love and firm faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading

(Isaiah 40: 1-11)

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.' A voice says, 'Cry out!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?' All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!' See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

R:/ The Lord will speak peace to his people.

Lord, you were gracious to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the offence of your people and covered all their sins. **R/**

I will listen to what the Lord God will say, for he shall speak peace to his people and to the faithful, that they turn not again to folly. Truly, his salvation is near to those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. **R/**

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other; truth shall spring up from the earth and righteousness look down from heaven. **R/**

The Lord will indeed give all that is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness shall go before him and direct his steps in the way. **R/**

Second Reading

(2 Peter 3:8-15a)

A Reading from the Second Letter of Peter

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

The Gospel

(Mark 1:1-8)

Alleluia! Alleluia!**Give thanks to the risen Lord.****Alleluia! Alleluia!****Give praise to his name.****God has proclaimed the just reward:****'Life for all men, alleluia!'****Alleluia! Alleluia!...**

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Listen to the gospel of Christ according to Saint Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight"', John the baptiser appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.**Come, let us praise the living God, joyfully sing to our Saviour.****Alleluia! Alleluia!...****The Homily****Rev Angela**

In this time of Advent as we approach the celebration of Christmas, we wait patiently to welcome and remember again the birth of Jesus, God's only son, Emmanuel, God with us. Usually in Advent sermons we talk about how hard it is to wait patiently - we talk about Advent Wreaths to count the Sundays of Advent; we talk about Advent calendars to count the days to Christmas Day. I think however this Advent feels so different and actually over this year we have shown that we can wait patiently for things to change; for things to change in the CoVid guidelines, in vaccine research, in testing, in treatment of the virus, we have shown that we have the capacity to wait patiently for the common good. Actually, maybe this year we can make this Advent a quiet prayerful period of waiting for the arrival of Jesus and to fully immerse ourselves in the meaning of Advent.

On this day we light the Advent wreath and remember the prophets, the inspired messengers of God's will throughout the generations. In our Old Testament reading we heard those wonderful words from the prophet Isaiah, familiar words for the advent season, but

words that for me seem more poignant in 2020. This chapter of Isaiah is the start of Isaiah's song, his life message from God. It begins with 'Comfort, O comfort my people' and this is the start of the wonderful words of hope in this scripture reading. These words were written for the second generation of the Exiles to prepare them for the Salvation that was to come. Then we hear those lovely words 'Every valley shall be lifted up every mountain and hill laid low, uneven ground will be made level and the rough places a plain'. How idyllic does that sound? The path we walk shall be smooth and flat, a path which all can follow, the way of the Lord shall be easy without obstacles and obstructions. I'm sure we have felt or maybe still are feeling that during this pandemic our faith has been difficult, we may feel we have been in those valleys or on those mountain tops, those dark and dangerous places and maybe the ground beneath our feet as been difficult to navigate. This prophecy says that God will help us in those places and will make our paths flat and level again. Finally, in this opening part of Isaiah's song he contrasts the permanent power and glory of God with the frailness of our human lives 'the grass withers and the flower fades but the word of God will stand forever'. We are frail and may have been frail, but we find strength in God's presence and promises. A rich scripture reading for our Advent journey this year.

This prophecy is echoed in the words of Mark's gospel, when Mark's opening describes John the Baptist preparing the way, making a straight the path to Jesus in saying 'the one more powerful than me is coming after me'. John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by baptising with water and in Jesus there was baptism by the Holy Spirit. In Baptism, we are commissioned to prepare the way of the Lord and the gift of the Holy Spirit leads us to continually renew our lives in Christ so that we might lead others to faith in God. Like, Isaiah, John the Baptist and the prophets of old, were called to be a messenger for one greater than themselves, we also are messengers in service to one who is greater than we are. As messengers in this world, we need to prepare a way for Jesus this Advent tide, but what does that mean for us in this age and era in which we live?

Firstly, we need to cut through the hype and consumerism of Christmas getting back to the basics of that First Christmas. It was amazing that God came as one of us in that stable in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago. This event still holds such power in our world. However, I wonder do we truly open that stable door in Bethlehem,

for all to see the meaning of that 1st Christmas or are we tempted to fluff it up as a cute story about a baby to make it more palatable but not as awe inspiring? Do we miss out the poverty of Mary and Joseph and an unmarried teenage bride that may be cast out by the community. An unmarried couple with no money to find a place to stay. A baby born in a stable and worshipped by the extremes of society at the time, the lowest in society the humble shepherd and the highest the wise kings from far away. A couple that needed to flee from a King who was threatened by their baby. Do we skip over the hard bits to keep it cute?

I think this year will be different in many ways, especially in our church celebrations, but we can still be messengers of God through our thoughts and deeds and actions this Advent tide. We can begin to set our feet firmly on the path and keeping our eyes focused on that baby in the manger, we can help others to see 'God with us' in the nativity story. The Christian's task and calling in advent is to prepare the way of the Lord: to so witness to those around us that a way is open for them to hear God's message of comfort and forgiveness and home coming. As we journey through Advent what will your life message be? How will it be read by others?

Hymn

**Lo! he comes with clouds descending,
once for favored sinners slain;
thousand, thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Christ appears on earth to reign.**

**Ev'ry eye shall now behold him,
robed in dreadful majesty;
those who set at naught and sold him,
pierced, and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
shall the true Messiah see.**

**Yea, amen! let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Savior, take the pow'r and glory,
claim the kingdom for thine own.
O come quickly, O come quickly,
O come quickly;
alleluia! come, Lord, come.**

The Intercessions

Lord, grant us a glimpse of your glory, open our eyes to your coming, that we may know you are with us always

Lord, you make a road through the wilderness and desolate places to meet us. We pray for your churches and congregations in the East Vale ministry area, that by your spirit we may be beacons of light in our communities. We pray for June, our bishop, and for Carin the bishop of Uppsala. May your blessing be all who worship and contribute to the life and work in Lagunda and Nysatra and on all who worship and contribute to the life of St Nicholas Church on this their patronal day.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Lord, our moments are held in your eternity and the glory we create is like the passing grass of the field. Give all leaders of nations wisdom and courage to face the longer vision and to seek peace and justice for all people. We pray for places of the torn apart by war, hatred or violence and all affected by natural disasters. May they get all the help they need to alleviate suffering

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Lord, you honour your creation. We give you thanks for all with whom we share life's joys and sorrows, rest and labour. We give thanks for our families and friends that we may share the light of your love with them is Advent tide. Transform our relationships to reflect your love and respect.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Lord, in your strength and weakness your glory is made known. Give patient hope to all who are ill at home or in hospital and all who care for them remembering especially.....any other you place on our heart. May your healing and loving touch be upon them at this time.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Lord, comfort your people in their grief and distress with the promise of your saving love. Gather to yourself all those who have died this week..... all whose anniversary occurs at this time and all our loved ones departed. We remember all who are grieve, that they may find comfort. Bring us and all the departed to rejoice in your salvation

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

In a time of silence, we offer our own prayers to the Lord who is among us now and is yet to come again in glory...

**Merciful Father accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

Hymn

**On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry,
Announces that the Lord is nigh:
Come then and hearken, for he brings.
Glad tidings from the King of kings.**

**Then cleansed be every Christian breast,
And furnished for so great a Guest!
Yea! let us each our hearts prepare
For Christ to come and enter there.**

**For Thou art our salvation, Lord,
Our refuge and our great reward,
Without thy grace our souls must fade,
And wither like a flower decayed.**

**Stretch forth thine hand, to heal our sore,
And make us rise, to fall no more;
Once more upon thy people shine,
And fill the world with love divine.**

**All praise to you, eternal Son, to thee
Whose advent sets thy people free,
Whom, with the Father, we adore,
And Spirit blest, for evermore.**