Sunday Morning Resources
6th December 2020, Second Sunday of Advent Year B

**Lectionary Readings** (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you must use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

- Isaiah 40.1-11
- Psalm 85.1-2,8-13
- 2 Peter 3.8-15a
- Mark 1.1-8

**Homily** - The voice of one crying out in the wilderness

Today’s homily has been written by Steve Mashford, Specialist Advisor - Warden of Readers

In today’s liturgy we hear again the lonely voice of John the Baptist calling us to prepare a way for the Lord. This involves finding time in our busy lives, and space in our busy hearts, for the Lord. Let us offer that time and space to the Lord now, so that we may take the love of Christ into the world (pause).

Advent is a season of expectation and preparation as the Church waits for the coming of Christ, both in his incarnation and as judge at the end of time. The readings and liturgies on this second Sunday of Advent are therefore looking forward not only to Christ’s birth, but also to his Final Coming.

In the Isaiah reading, the people are urged to prepare a way for the Lord, who is coming to save them. In the reading from 2 Peter, if the Lord appears to be slow in coming, it is to give the people an opportunity to be ready to meet him when he comes. And then in Mark, John the Baptist urges the people to prepare for the imminent coming of the Saviour.

The first reading is a message of hope and consolation addressed to the exiles in Babylon. Humanly speaking, at that time there was little grounds for hope. Yet the prophet assures his people that God is about to come to their aid, and, will lead them back to their own land in a new exodus. Even though the actual return from exile fell far short of the glowing picture painted here, Isaiah’s words point to the messianic era. This leads into the Gospel reading...
from Mark. We need to remember that it is 100 years since the Israelites have seen a prophet. Therefore, just like a new Elijah is someone they can recognise via John’s appearance in the clothes he wears. John also appears in the desert and announces the coming of the redeemer – Jesus, the Christ and Son of God. These are two Christological titles with which Mark begins his Gospel. Both readings issue a call to repentance: ‘Prepare a way for the Lord.’ In the Second Reading Peter is talking about the second coming. The reason for the Lord’s delay is to give everybody an opportunity to repent.

Let us think about the lone voice of a prophet. In today’s Gospel we hear the voice of John the Baptist announcing the good news that the long-awaited saviour was about to arrive. He urges the people to ‘prepare a way for the Lord.’ Mark slightly changes the text of Isaiah slightly, bringing the voice into the desert itself ‘A voice cries in the wilderness, Prepare a way for the Lord’. We see that vision of a lone voice in the wilderness. Here Mark needs to emphasise that John the Baptist was indeed preaching in the desert. He was not just preaching he was ‘crying out…’. It is Mark who gives the word this dramatic content. He only uses it twice in his gospel here and when he describes Jesus is on the cross calling out ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’. This makes it clear in Mark’s gospel what we are preparing for when we prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus. His coming reaches beyond Christmas to his cross and to resurrection and further.

The Israelites had lived on God’s promise: first of a land, then of a saviour. This is not to say that they didn’t sometimes forget it in good times and doubt it in bad times. And they knew a lot about bad times, the worst being the slavery in Egypt and the years of wandering in the desert. For many at this current time in this pandemic if feels like the bad times. The isolation for many at home and the extra workload for the key workers. What sustained the Israelites during all their bad times was the belief that God would not abandon them, or forget the promise he had made to them.

Just like the Israelites of old we too can forget God’s promise. There are lots of voices calling us in other directions. The most obvious ones are those that come from outside us. There are the strident, hate-filled voices of agitators calling us to racism, discrimination and bigotry. These are the voices of the newspaper, the radio, the television, fake news, social media,
which entertain us, inform us, and, distract us… …And of course there are the persuasive voices of advertising and commercials calling us to self-indulgence.

But some of the voices that call to us come from inside ourselves. The inner voices may not be so loud, but they are even more dangerous because they are so insidious and persistent.

But God too is calling us. God’s voice is perhaps the smallest and loneliest voice of all. It can easily be drowned out in the torrent of words, and in the din of daily life. God’s voice is not to be heard in the midst of the crowd. God’s voice is to be heard in the quiet, solitary places. We remember the times when Jesus would find a quiet place and be still to be with his Father.

The readings today remind us to speak up and to proclaim the message of God. Isaiah says there is a ‘voice crying in the desert’, where God urges us to ‘Speak tenderly’ and ‘Comfort my people. In Mark, the voice of John the Baptist cries out to implore us to proclaim a message of hope to our world by preparing the way of the Lord and getting ready for Him. Both are messages of hope to all those in need.

In a world of coronavirus and uncertainty, of war and terrorism, of poverty and injustice, of dishonesty and manipulation of the truth, and of political expediency, we are invited to practice our faith in the spirit of the great prophets and address issues of justice, peace, and genuine human development for all God’s people. The images in the readings today are images of hope and possibility. The rough way can be made straight, the broken made whole. God will come with power. There will be a new heaven and a new earth where the peace and righteous of the Christ child incarnate dwells.

In Advent we await in eager anticipation. Amen

*Play The Song of Kingdom Come:* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GixDgo91pMw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GixDgo91pMw)
*I have a voice, you have a voice, we have a voice when we sing together.*
Suggested intercessions

Let us pray that we may so prepare a way for the Lord that a world may be flooded with the grace of his coming.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

That those who minister to the flock of Christ may seek out, the lost, bandage the wounded, and make the weak strong.

{pause} we pray to the Lord.

That political leaders may strive to level the mountains of injustice and fill in the valleys of poverty, and so bring about a just society.

{pause} we pray to the Lord.

That those in high positions may give opportunities to those below them to use their talents and gifts.

{pause} we pray to the Lord.

That Christ may come with his truth to guide those who have lost their way in life

{pause} we pray to the Lord.

That the light of Christ may shine on those who live in the shadow of death

{pause} we pray to the Lord.

That we may create a time and a space for God in our lives

{pause} we pray to the Lord.

That God may grant our own special needs

{Longer pause} we pray to the Lord.

Almighty and ever-living God, your love surpasses all that we ask or deserve, open for us the treasures of your goodness, and grant us more even than we dare ask. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

Suggested hymns/songs

- Be still for the presence of the Lord
- Dear Lord and Father of mankind
- God’s Spirit is deep in my heart
- Great is thy faithfulness
- Hark the glad sound the Saviour comes
- How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him
- I the Lord of sea and sky
- Lord thy word abideth
- On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry
- Thou whose almighty word
- We have a Gospel to proclaim