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ADVENT 3A

11th December 2022

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Father God,

As I prepare myself for worship today, may I be open to receiving from you. May I expect to learn more about you, expect to be challenged by you, expect to encounter you.

But Lord, I make this space to come before in worship not just to receive but also to give, to connect. To offer myself and my life and my service as the natural response to what I have received.

As advent continues, through this time of waiting and anticipation, I say my prayers of thanks. Thank you that you are not a God who is in a hurry. The process of creation which produced the beauty of a winter's morning took hundreds of millions of years, so the process of new creation, of which Jesus' life and death is the first fruits, will be a slow but steady march towards beauty and restoration.

I ask that in my worship time today, I may catch a glimpse of that beauty. At the same time, I acknowledge that sometimes I get in the way of restoration breaking into the world, that sometimes I contribute to its failing rather than its recreation.

For this, I am sorry, and I come humbly before you to ask for forgiveness as I take a moment to acknowledge how I have fallen short in this past week.

I ask this in your holy name, and in full assurance of your forgiveness.

Amen.¹

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are most comfortable.

Hymn:

330 STF – Joy to the world, the Lord is come! - [YouTube](#)

Readings: Matthew 11:2-11 – [Click for reading](#)

Response to the reading

The Christmas season is a glorious time of decorated streets, family get togethers, excited children, cosy evenings, good food. But there are very few of us, beneath the tinsel and lights, who don't have something to worry about. Christmas does not magically lift us from our own difficult times, whatever they be.

And so, John the Baptist's message is relatable to us. We're not asked to ignore the realities of our lives, but to recognise them. There is room for our worry and our pain, in the Christmas story.

¹ Opening prayers written by All We Can

We're assured that a different future is possible, for the whole world but also for us, for you and for me. I wonder how much John the Baptist, in his prison cell, was reassured by this message? I wonder how much we are, in times of difficulty? We are told to wait for the Kingdom of God, and notice the signs that tell us it's near.

This advent, no matter what you're going through, no matter what doubts you have, we are called to live in a way which expects miracles, which expects signs of wonder, which expects Christ, Immanuel, to come - with a key to the bars of our prison cell. Hear him speak to you through the bars: you may feel like the least and the last and the lost, but even the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist, greater than anyone ever born. Hear Jesus' words to you:

you
are
free.²

You might like to watch this video from the Methodist Church: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-DxY1hSohE>

Does anything in this poem, or the characters in the video, resonate with you, and your story? Do you know someone who needs to know that there is room for them in God's story this Christmas season? Could you be the person to help them see this?

Blessing

Here I go, liberated and set free by the God who loves me, who comes here, with me.

Here I go, believing in the miracle of a Christmas God who came, who comes, who will go on coming, with me, alongside me,

Here I go, in the name of the Christ, Immanuel.

Amen.³

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 12th December

- On this day in 2015, the Paris Agreement was signed – a landmark moment in the global effort to combat the climate crisis. 7 years later, we have just finished COP 27, and there is still much work to do: politically, practically and in terms of imagination.
- Today our prayers are for the planet, and for all of us, that we can take the radical action required to change the story, to help us save our planet from ourselves. And for courage for you to be able to do what is in your power to change.

² Reflection written by Holly Adams

³ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Tuesday 13th December

- God of all grace,
Thank you for the gift of this day. May I use this moment, this space, this day, as if it were a gift from you.
May I see the opportunities to share your love with those around me.
Thank you for your love for me. Show me how to love you and how to express that love in the way I live my life.
Amen.

Wednesday 14th December

- On this day in 1918, the first general election in which women were allowed to vote took place in the UK. Since then, we have continued to make progress on gender equality, but we are not there yet. And there are a number of other areas where we still need to address social inequalities and treatment of people.
- Today we pray for all who have been discriminated against, and all who are working to tackle injustice. Show us how to play our part in creating a safer, kinder way of building society.

Thursday 15th December

- Look up a hymn or worship song on YouTube and sit and listen (you could use the one from this Sunday's worship, above, or look for your own).
- Don't do anything else while you listen.
Let your hands fall to your sides or rest in your lap. Let your mind, body and soul tune into God through the music in prayer.

Friday 16th December

- Christmas is a time of much gift-giving and gift-buying. Whether you are buying lots of gifts this year, or just choosing out a few things for a few people, use today to make your gift-giving a prayerful process. If you are wrapping gifts today, or buying something new, take a moment to pray for the person you are buying or wrapping for. Or, if you are one of those really organised people, go to the cupboard where the gifts are stored and hold one or two in your hands and pray for the people you will give them to.
- Try to move away from a way of thinking about presents as an exchange, and more as a means of grace, as you pray.

Saturday 17th December

- Light a candle.
- Jesus, you are the light of the world.
- Today, pray about the places you experience darkness in your life, that Jesus light might shine divine light into those spaces and places.