

twelvebaskets



ADVENT 2B

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

Produced by **twelvebaskets**. Subscription available from **theworshipcloud.com**

Second Sunday of Advent - Year B
6th December 2020



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

174 STF – Light a candle in a darkened place OR

176 STF – Like a candle flame, flickering small in our darkness

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR

58 STF – Lord, I come before your throne of grace

Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

Hymn:

180 STF – O come, O come, Immanuel OR

183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

264 STF – Make way, make way, for Christ the king in splendour arrives OR

369 STF – Baptise us with your Spirit

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy OR

189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice

Blessing

The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on www.theworshipcloud.com.

Copyright for content is retained by the original author / contributor.

www.theworshipcloud.com

Call to worship

Advent God, come amongst us.

God of hope, shine your light upon us,

Flickering, like a candle flame,

Advent God, we put our hope in you.

[At this point, you could play the Vine Video – Hopes for the Season 1].

Advent God, we put our hope in you.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

174 STF – Light a candle in a darkened place OR

176 STF – Like a candle flame, flickering small in our darkness

Opening Prayers

Holy God,

Quieten our minds from their ceaseless chatter,
Still us now as you calmed the storm...

[Pause]

We come before you today in awe and wonder

Knowing our words can never be enough,
but aware that they will be acceptable in your sight.

[Pause]

We approach you with thankful hearts
for reminding us that you are coming,
that we are not forgotten...
that despite the worst we can throw at you,
you still come.

[Pause]

Our penalty is paid.

Straighten our highways,
raise up our valleys,
and make our rough places smooth.

[Pause]

¹ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Help us to prepare a place for you...
in our hearts, in our street,
in our school, in our workplace,
in our nation, in our world.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

This is an extraordinary Christmas – a Christmas like never before.

Amongst the abnormal, the different, the adjustments, we've had to change the plans we had, the last minute re-arrangements as restrictions change and rules have to be updated – amongst all that is 'not as it should be', we have a chance to be a part of something amazing.

This Christmas, God is with us, Immanuel.

This Christmas, as every Christmas, we celebrate the coming of Jesus, in unexpected and remarkable ways.

This Christmas, as we give thanks for God's amazing gift to us in Jesus, we can also use the power of gifts to help others.

Perhaps you've already bought your Christmas presents, and are wrapping them up, thinking of your loved ones. Perhaps you are still giving some thought to what the perfect gift will be. And perhaps, this year, you have the chance to help people in some of the world's poorest communities with your gift.

Our friends at All We Can – the Methodist international development agency – are inviting us to buy an 'Extraordinary Gift' for someone this Christmas. A gift that will help transform the life of someone, or a whole family, in one of the communities where they are working.

For example, you could buy 'Bookworm' for the book-lover in your life. £24 could enable a teenage mother like Sitera in Malawi to return to school to learn the vital skills of reading, writing and arithmetic – unlocking the barriers to achieving her own full potential, and improving chances in life for both herself and her children.

Early marriage is common in Malawi and the impact of lockdown has resulted in many girls leaving school prematurely and so limiting their future options. With your gift you could help a girl like Sitera return to school and reclaim the chance to fulfil her potential.

Let's do something extraordinary this Christmas!³

² Opening prayers written by Phil Craine

³ All Age Talk written by All We Can

Hymn:

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR

58 STF – Lord, I come before your throne of grace

Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

Hymn:

180 STF – O come, O come, Immanuel OR

183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way

Reflections on the readings

Much like many of us might be at this time of year, this week's readings are full of anticipation. Each passage feels like it's teetering on the edge of a big arrival, anticipating a change to come. But, perhaps frustratingly, each passage leaves us just short. We are left waiting for the 'big moment' to arrive.

For many, this is the feeling we place ourselves in each year as we arrive at advent. A time of awaiting. As we move through each week of the advent season, we piece together more of the journey that anticipates the coming of Christ, a change that will reorient and reshape life to come.

This anticipation can be hard. Sometimes, instead of being able to fix our eyes on the change to come, we can get lost in the waiting. Anticipation without a sense of the destination is an anxious feeling.

But, as this week's passages encounter this same anticipation, they offer with it a reminder of the goal on which we fix our eyes.

Each passage talks about the arrival of God's kingdom. Isaiah 40 hears a voice say 'prepare a way for the Lord', and Psalm 85 believes that the Lord will 'give what is good'. In 1 Mark, we meet John the Baptist, a messenger tasked with going before Jesus, calling on people to anticipate his arrival.

In each of these circumstances, the writer speaks of what it looks like when God arrives. They paint a picture of the Kingdom of God that they are waiting for.

What does this Kingdom look like? Well, in each passage there's a sense that, in the world they are anticipating, things will be set right.

In Isaiah 4, each challenge on the unstable path ahead is dealt with as it needs to be: 'every valley shall be raised up, every mountain shall be made low, the rough ground shall become level, and the rugged places a plain'.

In Psalm 85, we read that when God dwells in the land, righteousness is at the centre. That instead of instability, 'steadfast love and faithfulness will meet'. As a consequence, goodness will come, and the land will produce more and more. This is a picture of a world set right with itself, and abundance blooming as a consequence.

And, in Isaiah we read both at the beginning and end of the passage that all of this will be held in comfort. That God will meet us tenderly, and lead us gently towards this coming Kingdom. All of this is a picture of hope – that the land in which we dwell might be met and transformed by God into a land where in peace, love, faithfulness and righteousness might be at the forefront.

This advent, we might be finding it hard to anticipate a world that looks like this. After a year of so many changes, of fear and worry, it might feel as if we have become untethered from this hopeful vision of God's Kingdom come. As we head into 2021, how might we anticipate this 'Good News' for the world we live in?

Once again, we can look to the passages to explore this. In each of these passages, as people wait for the coming Kingdom they're anticipating, they do so not passively but actively. In each, they are living out and declaring the Good News upon which they are fixing their eyes.

In Isaiah, the writer invites the bearer of 'Good News' to 'go up on a high mountain' and 'lift up your voice with a shout'! Those who see the vision of God's Kingdom come are invited to make it known to everyone, that the 'glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together'. They are called to have a prophetic voice, to speak God's Good News to others.

In 2 Peter, the readers are invited to declare the Good News in the lives they live. As they wait, they are called to live lives of 'holiness and godliness' – to live differently, that they might be found 'at peace'. Here, as they wait for the coming Kingdom, their lives are witness to the Good News.

Finally, in Mark 1, John the Baptist declares the Good News in his actions. He goes before Jesus, baptising people with water and declaring that soon, one will come who will offer so much more.

In each of these ways, we are shown how to live in Holy anticipation. To wait for the coming of God's Kingdom not anxiously, but by actively seeking to fix our eyes on the Good News God offers us.

How might we, as the Church, seek to live in Holy anticipation this Christmas? In these changing times, the Good News pictured here has so much to offer. In today's world, where the future is uncertain, Isaiah 40 and Psalm 85 offer a vision of things set right that is Good News in uncertainty. And, churches around the country have been offering this vision to those around them practically. As churches have engaged in mutual aid, food provision, mental health support, provision for those who are homeless, they have helped people to see a reality of faithfulness and love. As the Methodist Church, together with others, has called on the Government to 'Reset The Debt' of those trapped by Covid-19 related household debt, we have offered a picture of a different reality, where each challenge is met with the response it needs, and all things are set right for all people.

By declaring the Good News, living differently and acting for change, we are called to fix our own eyes on God's Kingdom. And, in doing so, we might be able to offer this vision to others, offering hope in anticipation this advent.

[As a church congregation or in small groups, you may like to read the Reset the Debt report and discuss some of the actions available as part of the campaign – visit this website to share some of these resources with your church: jointpublicissues.org.uk/reset-the-debt/].

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

264 STF – Make way, make way, for Christ the king in splendour arrives OR

369 STF – Baptise us with your Spirit

Prayers of intercession

Leader: Gracious God,

Response: **Speak peace to us today.**

God, You have been favourable to your people
In your grace pardoning us for the times we have neglected you,
Ourselves and one another.

In your endless love for us you have promised to speak peace over us,
That we might turn to you in our hearts and seek to be faithful.

Gracious God,

All: **Speak peace to us today.**

In your Kingdom, steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
Righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

As you seek to set all things right,
Might we seek to fix our eyes on this vision of your Kingdom,
Trusting in your promise that you will give all people what is good.

Gracious God,

All: **Speak peace to us today.**

God, Sometimes we struggle to see your vision for the world.

In the midst of change and challenge,
It can be hard to see where you are working for our good.

During this advent season,
Might we come together as a community
To support one another to catch glimpses of your kingdom,
That our faithfulness might spring up from the ground in abundance.

Gracious God,

All: **Speak peace to us today.**

⁴ Reflection written by Hannah Brown from the Joint Public Issues Team

God, We pray for those for whom the waiting is too hard.
For so many, poverty, debt and hardship has made this year unbearable.
For those families unsupported by our social care system.

For those whose mental health makes it hard for to see your goodness.

For those who need a reminder of your steadfast love and faithfulness.

May your righteousness go before them,
Making a path for their steps so they will not stumble.

Gracious God,
All: **Speak peace to us today.**

God, May we hear your voice of peace,
And know that in your kingdom is abundance of life for all.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

As we wait, as we enter into the Advent season, we are thankful for your miraculous gift to us, the incarnate Christ. We are grateful for all we have received, and seek to give of ourselves and see a better world made possible, in Jesus' name.

Lord, accept these gifts and come amongst us by your grace.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy OR

189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice

Blessing

We go from this moment, into a week of many moments,
Hoping for an encounter with your grace, with your Spirit.

Come amongst us, Advent God,

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Hannah Brown from the Joint Public Issues Team

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker