

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Third Sunday of Advent: 13th December 2020

Collect:

God for whom we watch and wait, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son: give us courage to speak the truth, to hunger for justice, and to suffer for the cause or right, with Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Psalm 126

1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and
our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said
among the nations, "The Lord has done great
things for them."
3 The Lord has done great things for us, and we
rejoiced.



4 Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the water-
courses in the Negeb.
5 May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of
joy.
6 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed
for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

A reading from the first letter to the Thessalonians (5.16-24)

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

This is the word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (1.6-8,19-28)

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

This is the gospel of the Lord. *Praise to you, o Christ.*

Reflection: *'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances... Do not quench the Spirit.... The one who calls you is faithful.'* The third Sunday in Advent is called 'Gaudete', Latin for 'Rejoice', Sunday. That's why we are lighting the pink candle on the Advent wreath today – pink to signify joy, in contrast to the purple, which signifies repentance. As we are getting closer to Christmas, a note of joyful anticipation is introduced into our watching and waiting.

This year, as we are moving toward Christmas many people's 'watching and waiting' is mixed with anxiety and frustration because of the COVID situation; many plans had to be changed or cancelled, including our own. This year will be the first time ever that we are unable to spend time with my German family after Christmas. And I expect, there will be many of you for whom this is a 'first time' ever, not seeing family or friends, or being invited round to someone's house at Christmas because of the restrictions, or not travelling to the place where you have gone for years. Then there are many other factors that come into play: less money to buy presents; chronic illness that requires you to shield; a significant bereavement – the first Christmas without a much loved family member or friend; a long standing hope that has not been met this year or not being able to attend a church service in person, not being able to receive communion. Whatever it is that feels hard and leaves us sad and grieving, Paul's words to the Thessalonians are intended for all of us. Those of you who are joining in morning prayer with Bishop Martin and myself will know that Paul is writing to the small church in Thessalonica, who are being persecuted for their faith. Paul, who started the church and dearly loves them is unable to return and visit. So, he writes to them, encouraging them to really hold on to what he has taught them, to live in faith, hope and trust, and to rejoice in the good news of Jesus Christ. *'Do not quench the Spirit'*, Paul says to them, say your prayers, read your scriptures, meet together to encourage and support one another and notice God's presence with you. *The one who calls you is faithful.* And this is what Paul says to us, in this season of Advent, when we are living with the backdrop of COVID and many other challenges, in our personal lives, our society and in our world. This year, more than in other years, we are aware how much we and the world are longing for healing and wholeness, justice and peace.

As we ponder the call to watch and wait in Advent, Rev Jackie called it 'to wait actively' in her sermon on the first Sunday of Advent, we also realise that the whole Christian life is about active watching and waiting, to notice God's presence with us, to see what God is doing in our lives and the world, as well as waiting for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The season of Advent is the time when we practice this, we are honing our skills for the year ahead – by making more time to pray, read the scriptures, to be still; by actively noticing the light of faith and love in the darkness; by reaching out to those in need, spreading the life in our world; by pondering the scriptures, especially the prophet Isaiah, the psalms as well as the opening chapters of the gospels. In Advent we wait to celebrate again the birth of Christ, God coming to take on human form, to share our human existence, to redeem our relationship with God and that of the whole creation. And the more we observe Advent, the more we wait, watch, ponder, the more we realise the amazing gift of the birth of Christ—of God coming to share our lives and to redeem the world. But, here, I am getting ahead of myself. For now, we are staying with our longing and hopes, our watching and waiting, to discover ever more deeply the gift of God-self to us and God's purposes for the world.

Advent is the beginning of the new church year, and the point of the church year is to tell and retell the history of our salvation, to remind us that our story, our history is held in God's story, in God's salvation history. When we live through the cycle of seasons, the seasons of waiting, preparation, celebration, ordinary time, year after year, is to help us recognise more and more how God's saving presence is with us. Someone suggested we could think of a snowball that gets bigger and bigger as it rolls down the hill, but it's still a snowball, which has picked up more and more layers.

So, this year as our waiting and watching, our preparation for Christmas is taking place in a world restricted by COVID, we know that God is very much with us, at work in our world. We pray for our Spirit not to be quenched, for the grace to give thanks in all circumstances and to be faithful in our watching and waiting for, the one who calls us is faithful. Amen.

Revd Jutta

God is love. Those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

This week's hymn:

Come, O long-expected Jesus,
born to set your people free;
from our fear and sins release us,
Christ, in whom our rest shall be.

Israel's strength and consolation,
born salvation to impart;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born your people to deliver,
born a child, and yet a King;
born to reign in us for ever,
now your gracious kingdom bring.

By your own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by your all-sufficient merit
raise us to your glorious throne.

For Our Prayers:

The Bishops are calling on every parish to join them using this prayer at home and at every act of worship for our church, that we grow in trust in God's providence and deepen our own generosity giving of ourselves and of our gifts.

**Loving God,
you are always with us,
and give us all we need to be your church
in Suffolk.**

**Help us, we pray, to give as we have received:
abundantly, generously, and joyfully,
that our worship and our service
may bear witness to your Kingdom of
unfailing love.**

**In the name of your Son
who gave himself for us,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dickerson, Rosemary, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Frank D., Andrew, Peggy, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Samantha, Rex & Jill, Margaret Christian

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Emily, Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Jean Dominy, Leslie Bloomfield, Katie (cancer), Alice (Joan's grandson's wife), Vincent Lightbody, Trish, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Maureen Dobson, Dagmar, Alice (Covid)

All who are affected by the Coronavirus in the UK and around the world: *For all who have lost their jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all who have lost their lives & livelihoods, the injured, the bereaved. For hospital and health care workers*

For our government & MPs', and local councillors: for honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for all. For refuges across the world & diplomats and peace makers, working to end conflicts

Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss: Eric Gilson, Diane Bloomfield, Peter Wardley, Leslie Symonds, Pearl Leggett RIP.

Call this number —> for free.

It's a lovely way to worship from home!



Notices:

Hymn & Carol-athon: a huge **THANK YOU** to Simon, the choir members, and to everyone who sponsored Simon. The hymn- & carol-athon raised £586!

The Mail order Market raised £450! A huge Thank you to Alison Gibbs, who organised it and to everyone who contributed goods for us to sell!

Advent & Christmas: We are planning various special services (to be booked into as we do for Sundays), including:

- Carol service - 13th Dec 6pm
- Zoom Carols - 20th 6pm
- Christingle Service - 24th 4pm
- Midnight Mass - 24th 11.30pm
- Christmas Day - 25th 10am

Alpha: We are starting a Zoom Alpha course on 7th January! It will run on Thursday evenings 7-9pm. We know from experience the best way to get people to come is for us to invite them personally, so please, *invite your friends, family, and neighbours*, and why not give it a go yourself!

Prayer! We want our church to grow, to share God's love wider. **Here is a prayer for us all to pray:**
"God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness. Help your Church here in Ipswich to grow younger, to grow in numbers and to grow leaders; in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."

To book by phone for Sunday services, call **01473 742973** in the week before the service, leaving your name, how many you are booking for, and your phone number.

This Week:

Sunday, 13th December

10am Eucharist: in-person worship with Zoom and livestream available

6pm Carol Service: carols and readings, on zoom and livestream as well.

Monday 14th December

7.30pm St Thomas Pilgrim Community Open Prayer Meeting. Contact Jutta or Malcolm for ZOOM invite

Tuesday 15th December

6pm Meditation Group livestream on [Facebook/StThomasPilgrimCommunity](#)

Wednesday 16th December

10am Eucharist, no need to book. Also livestreamed on [Facebook/StThomasIpswich](#)

Church website:

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

Maggie Rose; Rachael Rudge & family; Joan Scott; Judith Scott; Marilyn Smith; Brian & Jackie Sears; James (Hugh) Singleton; Jim & Daphne Startup



Birthdays this week:

16th: Amber Wilcox; **18th:** Eric Baker; **19th:** Canon Chris Chapman

Contacts:

Priest in charge: Revd Canon Jutta Brueck m:07958 360564

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Jutta's days off are: Fridays & Saturdays

Assistant Curate: Revd Cat Connolly m: 07530 412988

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Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs m:07906 665530

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If you would like to chat, you could also ring:

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