

### **Worship at Home – Sunday 5 December 2021**

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people across the Methodist Connexion are sharing this act of worship with you.

#### **Opening Prayer: Call to worship – Responsive**

Leader: Now is the time to get ready: **All: Let us prepare the way of the Lord!**

Leader: Now is the time to be changed: **All: Let us repent and seek forgiveness.**

Leader: Now is the time to welcome God into our midst: **All: Let us worship God in humble expectation.**

#### **LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE**

**Hymn: Come, thou long-expected Jesus (StF 169).** Listen to it here <https://youtu.be/OykTZvZPz48>

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| 1. Come, thou long-expected Jesus,<br>born to set thy people free,<br>from our fears and sins release us,<br>let us find our rest in thee. | dear desire of every nation,<br>joy of every longing heart.  | 4. By thine own eternal Spirit<br>rule in all our hearts alone;<br>by thine all-sufficient merit<br>raise us to thy glorious throne. |
| 2. Israel's strength and consolation,<br>hope of all the earth thou art,   | 3. Born thy people to deliver,<br>born a child and yet a king,<br>born to reign in us for ever,<br>now thy gracious kingdom bring. | <i>Charles Wesley (1707-1788)</i>  |

#### **Let us pray together**

Lord Jesus, Light of the World, the prophets said you would bring peace and save your people from trouble. Give peace in our hearts in this advent season. We ask that as we wait for you to come again, you would remain present with us. Help us today, and every day to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your peace with each other. We ask it in the name that is above all names, the name of Jesus Christ who is the reason for the season.

#### **Prayers of confession**

We have sinned against you;  
we have done evil in your sight.  
We are sorry and repent.  
Have mercy on us according to your love.  
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.  
Renew a right spirit within us  
and restore us to the joy of your salvation,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (*cf Psalm 51*).

**Readings:** Malachi 3: 1- 4; Luke 3: 1- 6

#### **Time to Reflect**

Today, as we step into this second Sunday of Advent, we are invited even more to prepare our hearts and minds for yet another Christ-mas, another coming of the Christ-child. And I have rarely met anyone who does not in some way want to be in on the expectant, hopeful feeling of this season. All around us, in the coming weeks, and certainly when Christians gather to worship and pray, people will be given the opportunity to celebrate the Holy birth of "God with us." This is the business of preparation, or as our Gospel lesson puts it, it is a time of "Making Straight the Way." A time of great preparation. With Xmas with us, decorations will be everywhere, This is all preparation.

Today's Gospel lesson reveals the work of the ultimate preparer. John the Baptist, whose ministry, some scholars tell us, lasted only about a few months. John comes to us and tells us to prepare the way. But for

thirty years, John's life had been leading up to this short period of ninety days during which he would build a path for the Saviour of the world.

The Scripture tells us that the forerunner John the Baptist did this to call on his hearers for "repentance." He modeled that in his own life by saying he was not even worthy to carry the sandals of the One Who was to come. John knew, despite some rather incredible popularity in his own right, that for God to work in his life and to continue His work on earth, the Baptizer had to step aside and allow Christ to begin for another preparation, the preparation for His kingdom.

If we are really to be part of the Advent season, I think we have to turn to John as a model. How do we "make the path straight" for the return of our Lord and in our day to day lives? Certainly there are many things, but let me briefly point to two:

The first is that we must utterly and wholeheartedly offer our lives to God in Christ. John the Baptist said that he must decrease so that Christ might increase. We are to do the same. We are consciously to offer ourselves to a deepening commitment and have a personal relationship to Jesus if we are to truly be children of the Light named Christ.

The second is that as John set his life on a path of making straight the way for others, we are called to do the same. Jesus tells us time and time again, that the greatest of all commandments...of all laws, is the law of love the law of concern for those around us. We, you and I, have an obligation to all those around us to take the skills, talents, gifts and resources we have and make straight the path for others to reach the Kingdom, by pointing the way as did John to Jesus.

This is crucial that each of us give of ourselves beyond joining in worship week after week. Not just by our prayers and words. We are called to - in all things - word and deed, prayer and action, by what we say and do, share the Christ story and thereby draw others into our journey to the end of the path.

As Advent continues, let us turn from those things, those paths that are not of God, open our hearts and our souls and say with all that we are, "Emmanuel, God with us." Amen.

Take a time to sit quietly

### **A time of prayer**

We pray... For those lost in the desert. May they find the straight path.

For those down trodden. May they be lifted up.

For those in dry places. May they find you as the living water.

For those heart broken. May they find peace in Jesus.

For those seeking healing. May they be healed.

For those seeking consolation. May they be comforted.

For those waiting to be heard. May they find justice in you.

For those waiting for transformation. May there be sprouts of change. Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

*Our Father .....*

**Hymn:** *'The prophets' voice comes down the years' (Stf 162).* Or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind.

1. The prophets' voice comes down the years  
to teach and to inspire,  
to show the nature of our God  
in words and deeds of fire;  
not to disclose some rigid plan  
that God has set in stone,  
but to renew the promises  
the saints have always known.

2. The prophets' voice speaks of the past --  
the actions that reveal  
the way God used the people then  
this broken world to heal;  
and then translates the things gone by  
in ways that we find new  
so we can judge the world we know  
by standards ever true.

3. The prophets' voice holds up a glass  
in which to see our day;  
events which span the globe around  
and things we do and say.  
It calls us to repent and turn  
from things that tear life down,  
to choose the path that Jesus chose  
and share his work and crown.

*Alan Hinton*

### **A prayer of blessing**

And now may the blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us and all we love now, tomorrow and the days to come. Amen.