

*Read or sing stf 182 On Jordan's banks.*

**Read Gospel reading Luke 3:7-18**

**Address part 2** So where does God fit in to how we live. The message interpretation talks about John telling Israel that their relationship with God needs to be seen by a change in the values they live by. John tells them not only to do what is required by the law but to go that extra mile and he doesn't mince his words about how they are living. In the message interpretation he says "You brood of snakes what brings you slithering down to the river ", John Knows that Jewish society had moved away from God's values to one were self was more important than those in need. He wanted them to turn back to God. He was trying to strip away the selfish side of their human nature that had impacted upon their relationship with God get them to try and be what God wanted his children to be like.

This advent I am sure that we all know that we are loved by God but how does the world that we are part of see that being lived out. This Christmas are we prepared to examine ourselves and look at the values we live by that show our response to God's amazing love.

In reply to being asked what to do "John tries to get them not to be so self-centred and grasping so when they saw need in people around then to respond to it. Loving them as God loved the people of Israel

As you reflect this advent on the Christmas story and the second coming may we all open our hearts and minds to the promptings of scripture and through prayer enable the Holy Spirit to continue to change us from within so that we become new in Christ. May we rejoice in knowing he loves us and share the hope peace and joy that he brings with others. For we are simply called to LOVE and do what that love prompts us to do in his name as we choose to walk with him through our lives. Amen.

**We offer up our Prayers of intercession.**

Lord we rejoice and give thanks that you love us and that you challenge and inspire us your

church to be your hands on earth. Make us expectant with your promise that you will come again and that you want to live in the hearts of each one of us. Take our lives and the talents you gave us to grow your kingdom and share your love by getting alongside those who need to know you. May be your hands gently at work in your world.

Lord we rejoice and give thanks for amazing love that seeks to bring about equality and justice. Move the hearts of those in power to recognise your truth above human status. Inspire them to bring about a just and righteous world where opportunities and resources are equally shared. fill all people with your virtue, mercy, and well-being. Transform the greed of our world society where money dominates decision with the generosity of your grace so that all humanity has enough to live. Turn us from hatred and fear of those different to us to one of being a loving presence in all situations.

Lord we rejoice and give thanks for your love which reaches out with a healing touch. May all who are infirm, ill, distressed, lonely or anxious know your presence and your loving arms enfold them. As we rejoice in you fill us with your healing Spirit so that we may show you caring compassionate love to all. Pour out your Spirit upon your church so that during this special time of year and beyond people can see that you are an active part of our lives as we serve you our King through serving them. Amen. We share together in the prayer Jesus taught us. Our father.....

**Our final hymn is Stf 185 Sing we the king.**

**Blessing** - May we always be found rejoicing in the love of God as we reach out to those around us to prepare the way for our Lord. May we Speak and act in loving ways to show that he walks with us blessing us and guiding us. So, we go out in the knowledge of our hope in him, with his peace and joy in our hearts, walking with the blessing of Father Son and Holy spirit this day and everyday Amen

**Prepared by Bill Holdforth**

**Circuit Worship at Home sheet for 3rd Sunday of Advent - 12<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

Call to worship. Psalm 16 v8-9 I know the Lord is always with me, I will not be shaken for he is right beside me. No wonder my heart is filled with Joy and my mouth shouts his praises.

Advent is a time of pausing in God's presence to reflect on our relationship with him. It is a time of hope, peace and joy found through Jesus who came into the world as a baby shared God's love with all he encountered, taught, and lived his life as an example to all. He challenged injustice, suffered, died on the cross and rose to glory. That same Jesus walks bedside us throughout our life and will come again to judge humanity.

**Hymn: StF 169 Come, thou long**

Prayers WE continue to praise and thank God in Prayer: - Lord of Hope peace and joy we give You thanks and praise for a new day. We arise today to a horizon guiding our eye beyond the everyday; to a dawn gently lighting up the wonders of Your creation and your will for the world; to a whispered dew rooting us firmly to this precious earth. For this and more we thank You and praise you

Lord of Hope peace and joy we give You thanks and praise for a new Church year. We arise today to the knowledge that Your Son, our Lord, is coming; to the hope that through His presence all people will be transformed; to the promise of salvation for all and that your joy will warm our hearts. For this and more we thank You and praise you.

Lord of Hope peace and joy we give You thanks and praise for a new start. We arise today turning our backs on the ways of judgement and criticism; throwing off narrow-minded assumptions; reaching out to enemy and friend with generous, compassionate hearts sharing the joy that you give us. For the promise of a new start, a new season, a new day, for these gifts and for so much more we thank and praise You. Amen

**Candle of Joy.** In churches with advent rings and liturgies in week 1 they light the candle of Hope, week 2 is the candle of peace and in, week 3 it is the candle of joy. At this time of uncertainty when depression starts to raise its head again as a new variant rumble into our lives these candles offer a bright light during a dark time. It is in such times that we need to continue to give thanks for the presence of Jesus in our life. Even in the darkest of times he brings hope eternal, peace through the Holy Spirit and joy in knowing we are loved. He is the light of the word come to make all things new.

**We sing or read stf 405 Great is the Darkness.** Some traditions call the third Advent candle the Shepherds candle, a candle of joy reflecting the joy they experienced meeting the Messiah face to face in Bethlehem at the prompting of the Angels. They saw God fulfilling his promise by entering our world in human form and reaching out to his children through his Son the bringer of Salvation. This gave them great Joy in their hearts, just as the anticipation of his Christmas Birth and second coming causes us to rejoice and give us great joy in our hearts today.

**Read Paul's letter to the Philippians 4 4-7**  
**Address part 1** Let your gentleness be evident

Two phrases leap out of the reading "Let your gentleness be evident to all" and "The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." These two phrases show what is expected from followers of Jesus and how God will enable us to fulfil his plan for us. He wants to build on the great joy of us knowing that we are loved to such an extent that he sent his Son into the world for each one of us. He wants us to be filled with his Joy!!

But I am a scientist, and the term joy can conjure up lots of different images of celebration and surprise. The joy of loving someone who also loves you. The joy of watching your football team gain promotion back into the EFL and watching grown men cry in joy. The joy of watching your children grow up into strong caring adults. The

birth of grandchildren all are joyful situations with lots of different emotions.

But what is this spiritual Joy that we are supposed to be overflowing with. What does that Joy actually mean for each one of us. Learned theologians tell us it goes beyond the momentary happiness that you might see in a child's face when they unwrap a gift that they'd hoped for on Christmas day. For often they quickly set that one aside and move on to the next present. Theologians define the JOY of knowing Jesus as an extreme happiness that cannot be deterred by our present circumstances for God transcends the human situation.

In romans ch15 v13 we find that this type of joy comes from God alone. It is a joy that when we recognise that through choosing to spend time in God's presence our faith in Jesus is often deepened. It is a joy in knowing that in trusting in Jesus we are able to inherit eternal life. It is the sort of joy that is God given and nothing can strip it away from us, because God loves each one of us. Paul's epistle to the Romans ch 8 v38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, [b] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Such joy as that brings is seen in an eager anticipation about wonderful things to come just as the shepherds experienced running to Bethlehem to see the babe, the messiah laying in a manger. But finding that joy in our hearts also brings a big challenge of what does that Joy prompt us to do. How do we as it says in Philippians let our "Gentleness be evident "to those we come into contact with. How do we let Jesus guide our thoughts and actions as we live out our faith?

**Pause and reflect on what people might see from your church life that shows that Joy.**

**How is our love of Jesus, our joy at knowing him, seen in who we are?**

We often let worldly expectations get in the way of listening to Jesus' prompting in living out that Joy and fail to respond by loving all as he loves us. For that we offer up our prayer of confession.

**Let us pray God who is love in action.** Love that prompts us to speak, love that asks us to listen, Love which empowers us in our weakness, Love that is eternal as you are with us through all we experience. Forgive us for not listening and for worshipping the idols of perfection, for being unable to see you in the vulnerable we encounter each day. Lord have mercy Christ have mercy

Forgive us for being so full of our own importance that we overlook the small things you call us to do for those in need. We often want to lead rather than to follow your will for us. Forgive our lack of perseverance in face of failure, doubts, rejections, and our inability to make connections between politics and health or economics and healing often separating faith from daily life. Lord have mercy Christ have mercy.

God love giver who became a vulnerable a Baby, Christ the wounded healer and Holy Spirit our compassionate friend who strengths and empowers us take away our weaknesses and strengthen us to share your love in all its fulness Amen Brothers and sisters In Christ in him we are made new. Thanks be to God.

In our communion service we say words that point at the wonder and authority of our God when we say: - Christ has died (past tense), Christ is risen (present tense) and Christ will come again (future tense). If you're like me the how and wherefore of the second coming is something that you may struggle to grasp. The amazing actions of God the father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are often beyond our ability to comprehend, for God does not fit into a comfortable box created by human dimensions and limitations for he is far greater than that. Our god is amazing take this opportunity to invite him again into your heart and ask him again to be part of everyday of your lives. For just like John the Baptist on the bank of the Jordan we are called to announce his coming and prepare the way by who we are.