

Welcome to
your Parish Church
in the Diocese of Birmingham



ALL SAINTS
KINGS HEATH

Shall they repair the ruined cities?



Holy Communion

Advent III, Sunday 17th December 2023

We gather

For those worshipping at home, have ready in an honoured place a portion of food and something to drink. It may be bread and wine or something else. Set your Bible alongside. If possible and safe, have four tea lights and matches ready, light two of them before you begin the service.

When the song finishes we stand in silence.

HYMN

[On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry](#)

1. On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake, and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings.

2. Then cleansed be ev'ry breast from sin;
make straight the way for God within;
prepare we in our hearts a home,
where such a mighty guest may come.

3. For thou art our salvation, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without thy grace we waste away,
like flow'rs that wither and decay.

4. To heal the sick stretch out thine hand,
and bid the fallen sinner stand;
shine forth and let thy light restore
earth's own true loveliness once more.

5. All praise, eternal Son, to thee
whose advent doth thy people free,
whom with the Father we adore
and Holy Ghost for evermore.

(words: Charles Coffin, trans John Chandler alt; music: from 'Musikalisches Handbuch' [1690])

Priest: Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ be with you all.

All: And also with you.

WELCOME and NOTICES

We pray: **Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires
known and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the
thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy
Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily
magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Each Sunday we light one of the Advent candles to remember those who
prepared God's people for the coming of Christ. For those at home, now is the
time to light your third candle if you have one, saying the prayer below.*

First Sunday – the Hebrew Fathers and Mothers of our Faith
Second Sunday – the Prophets
Third Sunday – John the Baptist
Fourth Sunday – the Virgin Mary



We pray: Lord Jesus, light of the world, John told the people to prepare, for you were very near. As Christmas grows closer day by day, help us to be ready to welcome you now. **Amen.**

CANDLE SONG

1. Stay awake, be ready.
You do not know the hour
when the Lord is coming.
Stay awake, be ready.
The Lord is coming soon!
Alleluia, alleluia!
The Lord is coming soon.

2. Prepare! he's coming!
The one who will give peace
to the world is coming!
Prepare! he's coming!
The reign of God is near!
Alleluia, alleluia!
The reign of God is near.

(words & music: Christopher Walker)

We seek forgiveness

CONFESSION

Deacon: When the Lord comes he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

(cf 1 Corinthians 4:5)

Silence

Heavenly Father, you call us to prepare for the coming of your Son: forgive us our un-readiness to receive him. Lord, have mercy.

[Kyrie eleison.](#) X3

Lord Jesus, you were proclaimed by John the Baptist: help us also to prepare your way. Christ, have mercy.

Christe Eleison.

Holy Spirit, you speak through the prophet: make us attentive to hear your word. Lord, have mercy.

Kyrie eleison.

(music: Orthodox chant from Ukraine)

[May] Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has give us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive *us our* sins, open *our* eyes to

God's truth, strengthen *us* to do God's will and give *us* the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

A COLLECT for the third Sunday of Advent

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you, grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

OLD TESTAMENT READING Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-end

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

For I the LORD love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,

and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

PSALM 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
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.'
The LORD has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.
May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

NEW TESTAMENT READING 1 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.

HYMN [Hark! a herald voice is calling](#)

1. Hark! a herald voice is calling:
"Christ is nigh!" it seems to say;
"Cast away the dreams of darkness,
O ye children of the day!"
2. Startled at the solemn warning,
let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, her sun, all sloth dispelling,
shines upon the morning skies.
3. Lo, the Lamb, so long expected,
comes with pardon down from heav'n;
let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
one and all to be forgiv'n.
4. So when next he comes with glory,
wrapping all the earth in fear,
may he then, as our defender,
on the clouds of heav'n appear.
5. Honour, glory, virtue, merit,
to the Father and the Son,
with the co-eternal Spirit,
while unending ages run.

*(words: 'Vox clara ecce intonat' [6th century], trans Edward Caswall;
music: William Henry Monk; descant: John Barnard)*

We remain standing for the GOSPEL READING John 1:6-8; 19-28

All: Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

At the end This is the Gospel of the Lord
All: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON *in Church is from David*

For those at home: hear again from Isaiah: "I, the Lord, love justice." (61:8)

*There have been some months of debate whether the government was presenting
an illegal immigration....bill,
or an illegal...immigration bill.*

Our foreign secretary sternly told Israel this week to adhere to international law, then rushed back to vote on the said bill with which the government says we will "disapply" elements of our own human rights act. When we have to invent a word like "disapply," we have probably already admitted to ourselves that we are doing something wrong. Some politicians were proud and delighted to leave Europe and are very eager to loosen all ties with the European standards on human rights, including the right to family life. This is taking effect now as some seek to forbid people from overseas, working here on average salaries, from bringing their family to live with them. If any party claims to be the party of Law and Order we might want to shine an even brighter light on them to check. Wherever we are on the political spectrum and whether we think the Rwanda policy is a good idea or a disgrace, we surely find Isaiah's words clarifying.

*That God loves justice shines light on the murky machinations of this week.
That God's kingdom proclaims release to captives shines light on the suicide of a migrant
imprisoned on the Bibby Stockholm barge this week.
That God longs to bind up the broken hearted highlights the bleakness of that place.*

*Meanwhile we wonder which destroyed or dangerous cities and communities those
incarcerated on the barge have fled from. They must wonder if they will ever be rebuilt.
We surely wonder if Gaza can ever be rebuilt. It's hard to imagine as we look helplessly at
every smashed up building and rubble strewn street. But Isaiah, in no less bleak a time,
insists that they can. He speaks of God's "recompense" and "vengeance," only to startle us
with the fact that for God they are expressed not in destruction but rebuilding; not in
violence, but in healing and growth. Justice for God it seems is a minimum standard of
behaviour. S/He expresses "vengeance" for past wrong by giving a new start. Built upon a
foundational judgement of justice, God then proceeds to build an edifice of grace. The
Anointed One whom John announces will likewise set a baseline of justice. (In Luke
particularly he re-sets our understanding of the relationship between rich and poor.) Then
he will demonstrate that justice is not an end goal, but rather becomes the launching
point of grace and mercy.*

*This all may give us pause to wonder for whom we should pray this particular week in
Advent, Isaiah and John ringing in our ears.*

We affirm our faith

We stand and at home, if able, we turn to look in the direction of Church:

Deacon: We stand to declare our faith in God, made known to us as Father,
Son and Holy Spirit:

**All: We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith and fills us with his
love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high.**

We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTERCESSIONS

Say the word "oppressed" several times over. See who comes to mind and pray for them, asking God: what would be good news for them?

Say the word "Captive," perhaps a few times. See who comes to mind and pray for wisdom about what "freedom" might look like for them.

Say the words "Broken-hearted" over several times. See who comes to mind and pray for them. Ask what "binding up" might be for them, and who might be needed to do it.

Pray by for any politicians you support, saying after each name: "God, you love justice. Help us to love justice."

Pray for any politicians with whom you disagree, saying after each name "God, you love justice. Help us to love justice."

Among those in our community who have asked for our prayers, we remember Tricia Howard and Ingrid, Janet Tilley, Wendy Turner, Adrian Koslowski, Lynn Busfield and Kathy Farbrother.

Among those who have died, we remember Norman Brookes whose funeral is this week.

We stand for THE PEACE

Deacon: The true light which lightens everyone is coming into the world.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All: and also with you. (cf John 1:9)

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

HYMN

The Table is prepared in Church. At home, now is the time to say the Lord's Prayer (below) and consume the food and drink you have prepared.

We tell the story of salvation

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right to give you thanks and praise, Lord God, for you have clothed us with the garments of salvation, and covered us with the robe of righteousness. In baptism you forgive our sins,

part the waters of our liberation and bring us to the safe shore of everlasting life. In faithfulness you keep our spirit and soul and body sound and blameless until the coming of your Son Jesus Christ. In his death you dismantle the power of death and in his resurrection you raise up the joy of everlasting life. And so we greatly rejoice and exult with our whole being in the sanctified company of angels and archangels of heaven, joining the unending hymn.

All: **Holy, holy, holy Lord,**
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest. (Shephard)

Abiding God, you made an everlasting covenant with your people, and when that covenant was jeopardized you sent your Son Jesus. In bread and wine he re-enacted your Passover promises and became the Lamb of God that takes away our sin. Send now your Holy Spirit on us that we may hold fast to what is good and live in the freedom of being your children. Send your Spirit upon this bread and this cup that they may be for us the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Who, at supper with his disciples, took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread and gave it to them saying, "Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

A bell is rung

After supper he took the cup. Again he gave you thanks, and gave it to his disciples saying, "Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

A bell is rung

Deacon: Great is the mystery of faith:
All: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

God of justice, send your Spirit upon your people in their wilderness. Bring good news to the oppressed and all who live with the chains of debt. Bind up the broken hearted and any who languish in the slavery of another's scheming or the rule of their

own folly. Proclaim liberty to the captives and those who live under the shadow of fear at home, at work or in their neighbourhood. Announce release to the prisoners and to all who are incarcerated by their own body or the travails of their own mind. Usher in the year of your favour and deliver your people from sin and guilt and addiction and shame. Provide for those who mourn, that they may have a garland instead of ashes and the oil of gladness instead of mourning. Show us your face, everlasting God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Deacon: As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Priest: We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All: Though we are many, we are one body. For we all share in one bread.

Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you and his blood which he shed for you. Eat and drink in remembrance that he died and now lives for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

We sing: [Jesus, Lamb of God: have mercy on us.](#)

Jesus, bearer of our sins: have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world: grant us peace. (Shepherd)

We pause to remember all who pray at home, then share the bread and wine, now for us the body and blood of Christ.

HYMN *during Communion*

We are sent out

We pray **Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with your Word [and with the body and blood of Christ]. Strengthen us in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.**

THE BLESSING

[May] Christ the sun of righteousness shine upon *us* and scatter the shadows from *our* path and make *us* ready to meet him when he comes in glory, and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with *us* now and always. **Amen.**

HYMN [Rejoice, the Lord is King](#)

1. Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore;
mortals, give thanks and sing,
and triumph evermore.

*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
rejoice, again I say, rejoice.*

2. Jesus the Saviour reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when he had purged our stains,
he took his seat above.

3. His kingdom cannot fail;
he rules o'er earth and heav'n;
the keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus giv'n.

4. He sits at God's right hand
till all his foes submit,
and bow to his command,
and fall beneath his feet.

(words: Charles Wesley; music: George Frideric Handel; descant: John Wilson)

Deacon: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ, Amen.

Do stay for coffee after the service if you can, and participate in the Big Christmas Card.

This evening 6.30pm Carols by Candlelight

Compline, Wednesday 9pm in the Chapel.



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