

# Parish of Central Exeter

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent

12 December 2021

### 'Gaudete!' Be filled with joy!

Welcome everyone.



*Our reflections this morning are by Sheila and the Intercessions provided by Caroline. Many thanks to you both.*

### **The Lighting of the Advent Candles**

*The third candle is used to remember John the Baptist.  
If you wish to light a candle at home, do so now with these words, and we all join in with you:*

We light this candle for all God's messengers,  
preparing the way for change,  
signs pointing to a new age to come.  
God, as we wait for your promise,  
Give light, give hope.

### **Call to Worship**

A reading from the prophet Zephaniah:  
'On that day they will say to Jerusalem,  
'Do not fear, Zion;  
do not let your hands hang limp.  
The LORD your God is with you,  
he is mighty to save.  
He will take great delight in you;  
he will quiet you with his love,  
he will rejoice over you with singing.'

The Messiah is on the way to us.  
As we prepare for his coming,  
may we repent of our sins.  
May we remember our baptisms with water.  
May we be ready to be baptized with God's Holy Spirit and fire.  
May we be ready to help our Lord proclaim the good news of God's love to all people,  
so that the world will be filled with joy. Amen.

*The third Sunday in advent is also known as Gaudete Sunday because it's the first word (in Latin) of the introit set for this Sunday (Philippians 4: 4 Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice) which in Latin is 'Gaudete in Domino semper; iterum dico, Gaudete.' For this reason, the third candle is also the candle for joy.*

**Let us rejoice!**

Because Christmas is almost here  
Because dancing fits so well with music  
Because inside baby clothes are miracles.  
Gaudete!

Because some people love you  
Because of chocolate  
Because pain does not last forever  
Because Santa Claus is coming.  
Gaudete!

Because of laughter  
Because there really are angels  
Because your fingers fit your hands  
Because forgiveness is yours for the asking  
Because of children  
Because of parents.  
Gaudete!

Because the blind see.  
And the lame walk.  
Gaudete!

Because lepers are clean  
And the deaf hear.  
Gaudete!

Because the dead will live again  
And there is good news for the poor.  
Gaudete!

Because of Christmas  
Because of Jesus  
We rejoice!

*(by Brad Reynolds, S.J., Posted on Journey with Jesus.)*

## Worship Music

'Gaudete' sung by Steeleye Span. The words in Latin and English are on screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTAUnjVomZk>

## Confession

*We are reminded:*

God is the source of our joy,  
But our sin often hinders our joy and the joy of others.  
Let us confess our sins before God and one another.

*Confession:*

Gracious God,  
with joy You brought us into being.  
You created the world and called it good.  
And yet we have done so much to quell that goodness:  
we have fought with one another and failed to live in peace;  
we have shut out the stranger and disparaged the immigrant;  
we have ignored the needy and judged the poor;  
we have fallen short of Your command to be Your Beloved Community.  
Forgive us, Merciful God, and bring us back to the joy we find in You.  
This we pray in Your holy name. *Amen.*

*Assurance of Pardon and Forgiveness:*

The prophet Zephaniah reminds us of these truths:  
God rejoices over us with gladness;  
God renews us in love;  
God will exult over us with loud singing.  
In the name of Jesus Christ, I proclaim:  
Our sins are forgiven.  
Amen

## The collect for Advent

Almighty God,  
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness  
and to put on the armour of light,  
now in the time of this mortal life,  
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in  
great humility;  
that on the last day,  
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty  
to judge the living and the dead,  
we may rise to the life immortal;



through him who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

### **Collect for the third Sunday in Advent**

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 of right,  
with Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Worship song**

'Come thou long-expected Jesus', sung here by the choir of St John's College, Cambridge.  
Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEEd0uWnDGs>

### **New Testament Reading Phil 4:4-7**

<sup>4</sup> Always be filled with joy in the Lord. I will say it again. Be filled with joy.

<sup>5</sup> Let everyone see that you are gentle and kind. The Lord is coming soon. <sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need, always giving thanks for what you have. <sup>7</sup> And because you belong to Christ Jesus, God's peace will stand guard over all your thoughts and feelings. His peace can do this far better than our human minds.<sup>1</sup>

*Easy to Read version Copyright © 2006 by Bible League International*

### **Reflection**

The third Sunday of Advent has an underlying message about joy, as the coming of the Messiah is good news. For the crowds who went out to the wilderness to see and hear John there was a sense of excitement and expectation, a scent of joy in the air. Could he be the long-awaited Messiah? John is quick to deny the fact and to point to another who will come after him. Though his words may seem direct and harsh they bring forth a response from his hearers.

Luke alone describes three categories of people who question John about their personal response. These are all ethnically Jews and John's words are practical and encouraging. For the crowds it is a call to share with those in need. For both the tax collectors and soldiers, collaborators in the hated Roman governance, John asks them to behave decently and morally by not over-charging people and being content with what they have. He does not tell them to leave their jobs or to change the social structure but to work within it and treat

people with respect. He encourages them to look not at him but for the 'one who is more powerful than I (who) is coming'. This is the good news that he proclaims.

Centuries before, the prophet Zephaniah after pronouncing words of judgement on Judah, concluded with a picture of a remnant in Jerusalem who are humble and trust God (3:12). They are not to fear because not only is God with them and is 'mighty to save', but he takes delight in them and loves them and is full of joy and sings over them. (3:16, 17). This is the God that Luke will later in his gospel describe in Jesus's memorable parables of the shepherd who rejoices over his one lost sheep, the woman full of joy at finding her lost coin and the father rushing out to meet his long-lost son then holding a celebration.

Paul received forgiveness and salvation when he stopped persecuting the first followers of Jesus and turned to faith in Jesus. He was baptised and received the Holy Spirit which then strengthened and enabled him to sing hymns to God while in prison in Philippi (Acts 16:25). A few years later, again in prison, he writes to the believers in Philippi a letter which is full of joy. This is no surface happiness or forced grin but a deep sense of contentment and trust in God who loves and cares for individuals. He encourages them to trust God by giving their anxieties to him and to be grateful and content. Then he promises them that God's peace can protect them.

He could also have quoted a phrase from the book of Nehemiah. In chapter 8 the small community of returned exiles in Jerusalem, worried about the future, listen to the reading of the covenant law. As the requirements of the law are explained to them, they realise how they have broken them and start weeping. Nehemiah says this is not a day to mourn but to celebrate as they recognise what is wrong for 'the joy of the Lord is your strength'. (Neh 8:10)

The CMS Prayerlines reflection for 4/5 December came from a CMS mission partner, Lynn Treneary, in South Sudan, a country that is facing many difficulties – famine, floods, civil war flaring up again. In such a bleak situation she wrote.

'The joy of the Lord is in this place. The Lord is here in power, bringing hope where there is none to be found in the world. Bringing joy where there is little but sorrow. Bringing love and peace in a battle-torn country. Maridi is a glorious example of somewhere we see God at work when we look with our spiritual eyes.

I am always learning how to be closer to God through the attitudes and behaviours of my friends here. Theologians and scholars may have their place but give me the singing and dancing of the children, youth and adults. Some of us have nothing to give but our hearts. We don't have higher education, we don't have money and plenty, we don't even have wisdom and knowledge, we are unable to fix anything and we are tired, but I remember Jesus telling us which are the most important commandments: Love God and love your neighbour. This I see in action.'

## **Prayer**

At the heart of Christianity  
is a power that continues to speak to  
and transform us.

As I found to my surprise and alarm,  
it could speak even to me.

What I heard, and continue to hear,  
is a voice that can crack  
religious and political convictions open,  
that advocates for the least qualified,  
least official, least likely;  
that upsets the established order  
and makes a joke of certainty.

It proclaims against reason  
that the hungry will be fed,  
that those cast down will be raised up,  
and that all things,  
including my own failures,  
are being made new.

It offers food without exception  
to the worthy and unworthy,  
the screwed-up and pious,  
and then commands everyone to do the same.

*(excerpted from Sara Miles in A Hunger Beyond Food. Posted on the Seed Publishers website. <http://www.seedspublishers.org/>)*

## **Affirmation of Faith**

Jesus taught us to speak of hope as the coming of God's kingdom.

We believe that God is at work in our world  
turning hopeless and evil situations into good.  
We believe that goodness and justice  
will triumph in the end  
and that tyranny and oppression cannot last forever.  
One day all tears will be wiped away;  
the lamb will lie down with the lion,  
and justice will roll down like a mighty stream.

True peace and true reconciliation are not only desired,  
they are assured and guaranteed in Christ.

This is our faith. This is our hope. *(20<sup>th</sup> century South African creed. )*

## **Worship song**

Of the Father's Love begotten.' Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3ety6K8w1Y>

## **Intercessions**

Heavenly Father, as once again we prepare for Christmas, help us find the time in our busy lives for quiet thought and prayer, that we may reflect upon the wonder of your love and allow the story of the Saviour's birth to be received with joy.

So may our worship be more real and our lives worthier of all that you have done for us through the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray for the Church

For Christians worldwide as they celebrate, and especially for those who cannot do so openly.

For Christians in our own country, in our diocese and in this parish

Grant that all who come to our church this Christmas will find a welcome and may be enabled to renew their relationship with you. Help us all to be glad of your presence and rejoice at the coming of Jesus. May your blessing be upon all who worship with us, and give us grace to live as faithful members of your family learning afresh every day to love and serve you.

Lord in your mercy ..... hear our prayer

We pray for peace

Give peace to the victims of war, the refugees and all who suffer from the consequences of conflict.

We know that without justice there can be no peace.

Let peace come when all are respected, regardless of race or religion.

Let peace come when trading in weapons and arms is recognised as a crime.

Let peace come when the earth's resources are used wisely for the common good.

Let peace come when money is used to serve and not enslave.

Let peace come through the transformation of our lives as we seek justice, live kindly and walk humbly with our God.

Lord in you mercy .... hear our prayer

We pray for those in need

We remember that our Saviour was born away from home and that the Holy family had to flee into Egypt.

We pray for all those who have no home for whatever reason.

We pray for those who travel in search of a better life

We pray for refugees in camps who can only dream of a home  
And Lord we pray for those who work tirelessly to assist the homeless and the desperate in providing shelter  
and counselling, for those who run foodbanks to provide food and cheer to the hungry, for the agencies and the individuals who seek out and bring meals and comfort to the lonely.

Lord in your mercy .... hear our prayer

We pray for the sick and the dying

Lord we pray for those who are ill at this time, whether at home or in hospital, and especially those known to us.

We hold them in the quietness of our hearts bringing them to you in the knowledge that you love them and know their every need.

We thank you for the devoted care of doctors, nurses and all hospital staff as well as those who care for people in their own homes.

We pray for those whose lives are ending at this time. Bring blessing and peace to them, and comfort to those who watch and grieve.

Lord in your mercy .... hear our prayer

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light no darkness can quench. Help us to experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of our church family as we bring our prayers and concerns to you Our Father in Heaven.

*(Adapted from thischurch.com)*

## **The Peace**

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

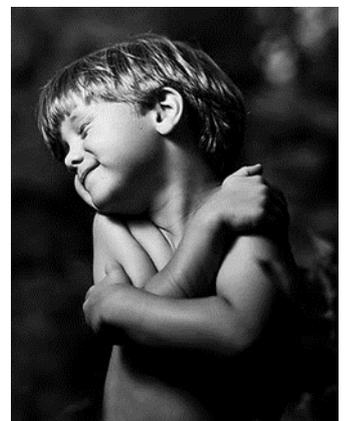
## **A short Spiritual Communion**

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.



O God,  
help me to trust you,  
help me to know that you are with me,  
help me to believe that nothing  
can separate me from your love  
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **An offertory prayer**

*We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.*

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,  
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.  
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,  
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,  
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

*As we prepare for communion you might like to listen to Nigel and St David's Choir singing  
'God to Enfold you'*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLwVGNkMDwQ>



*Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can  
have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm  
sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of  
silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it  
a sacramental moment.*

*Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection  
you may wish to say*

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits you have given me,  
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.  
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,  
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.  
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,  
may I know you more clearly,  
love you more dearly,  
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

## **Post Communion Collect**

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts;  
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit  
that when your Christ comes again  
we may shine as lights before his face;  
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.

## **Commission & Benediction**

In a cynical and despairing world, O God,  
give us a quietly prophetic voice  
to proclaim your hope.

In a violent and angry world, O God,  
give us a quietly prophetic voice  
to proclaim your peace.

In a dismissive and disinterested world, O God,  
give us a quietly prophetic voice  
to proclaim your compassion.

And may our quietly prophetic lives,  
be channels of your restoring grace  
wherever we may go. Amen.

*(written by John van de Laar, and posted on Sacredise.com)*

## **Benediction**

Rejoice in the Lord always,  
show gentleness to all,  
do not be anxious,  
make your needs known to God  
by prayer, with thanksgiving;  
and the peace of God  
guard your heart and mind  
in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

*(by Michael Perry. Posted on The Jubilate Group website.)*

## **Closing Music**

‘This little light of mine!’ An animated version. Words on the screen. A joyful ending.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsbRIg-ebWg>



## Sun Tunnels

A large scale outdoor installation in the Great Basin Desert, Utah, by Nancy Holt.