



02C ADVENT 2C LITURGY

The great leveller

Abstract

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OLD TESTAMENT

Malachi 3:1–4

The Coming Messenger

3 See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; ³ he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. ⁱ

GOSPEL

Luke 3:1–6

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, ² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³ He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

⁵ Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;

⁶ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ” ii

02C Advent 2C Liturgy

THE GREAT LEVELLER

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2021 | ADVENT 2C | SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT | YEAR C

<i>Old Testament</i>	Baruch 5:1–9 or Malachi 3:1–4
<i>Psalm</i>	Luke 1:68–79
<i>New Testament</i>	Philippians 1:3–11
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 3:1–6 ⁱⁱⁱ

John the Baptist hears God's word and begins a ministry, baptizing people as a sign of repentance and telling those he meets that Jesus will be for all people. His work echoes the prophecy in Isaiah, that there will be a voice crying out to prepare the way of the Lord. Isaiah shows that Jesus' message is one of equality – not just for the rich and powerful and not just for the Jews.

Signs are important to us. They can tell us how to behave, where to go – and where not to go! A sign might tell us that the road ahead is bumpy, but probably not that it is smooth! But this week, we are going to see how Jesus is a sign for everyone that, regardless of who we are or what we do, we are all equal in the sight of God.

This week we explore John as a sign that Jesus is for all.

	Pre-Service
	Introit Prepare ye the way of the Lord
	Greeting May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all and also with you
	We Gather Call to worship Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill be made low; the crooked will be made straight, and the rough ways be made smooth. All people shall see the salvation of God, and we come now to worship.

Acknowledgements

As we gather together in this place today,
 we acknowledge the people who were,
 who are, and who will be
 the first inhabitants and custodians of this place
 from time beyond remembering.

A gathering prayer

As we celebrate week 2 of Advent,
 we worship you with peace Advent God
 may all see –a sign that Jesus is for all.
 May we know God's presence and power
 as we gather in the name of Jesus,
 who satisfies the deep thirst for peace in the world. Amen.

Candle Liturgy

If you look at most litanies for Advent candle ceremonies,
 it might strike you that they can be very 'Northern Hemisphere'.
 The coming of light in the darkness is very appropriate
 when you are going into midwinter, and the days are getting shorter.

But here in Australia,
 it might be good for a change if not well received
 to think of Advent in terms of what most Australians
 long and hope for most at this time of year – water!

L: As we pour the water for our Advent wreath we remember our deep thirst for peace:

Response: We long for your peace, O God.

L: The peace of a long soak in a hot tub after a hard day's work.

We long for your peace, O God.

L: The peace of steam rising around a home saved by the sweat and sacrifice of a community of firefighters and their supporters.

We long for your peace, O God.

L: Peace as deep and mysterious and teeming with life as the vast oceans.

We long for your peace, O God.

L: *You may name people and places which are in particular need of God's peace at this time (some examples follow, but you may have more):*

Between neighbours who disagree
 With families involved with the Family Court
 In Afghanistan In Iraq or on borders in Europe...and elsewhere
 People who have been victims of crime
 People living with grief People facing medical procedures and disease

L: Advent God, we worship you with peace.

We long for your peace, O God. Amen

	<p>Hymn/song TIS #647 – “Comfort, comfort all my people”</p>
	<p>Welcome Over the last year I have watched as people repaired roads around my house. The workers need to prepare the surface before they can fix the road. They might need to dig up the bitumen, they might need to fix drainpipes or other things that go under the road. Then they need to put down special layers of dirt and gravel. All this happens before they can lay the bitumen again and fix the gutters.</p> <p>Today we use machines to fix roads.</p> <p>In our Bible reading today we are going to hear about a man named John who asked people to prepare for the special one of God. He said, ‘Get the road ready for the Lord! Make a straight path for him. Fill up every valley and level every mountain and hill. Straighten the crooked paths and smooth out the rough roads. Then everyone will see the saving power of God.’ Luke 3:4b-6 CEV</p> <p>Wow that sounds like a lot of work – especially if they didn’t have Bulldozers, backhoes and bobcats.</p> <p>I don’t think John really meant for us to dig up hills and fix roads.</p> <p>I think he meant for people To prepare their hearts to hear Jesus. This goes for us today too! We need to prepare our hearts to hear Jesus too.</p> <p>It is a busy time of year with parties and school holidays coming up. We are excited about Christmas and maybe seeing family members we don’t see very often. But Christmas is foremost about Jesus.</p> <p>We can prepare for Christmas by taking some time every day to think about Jesus – the good things he did. We can take time to listen to or read stories about him. We can pray and sing songs.</p> <p>Then when Christmas comes, we will know just how wonderful he is as we celebrate his birthday.</p>

	<p>A prayer of approach</p> <p>We come to praise you, Lord, God of Israel and all the nations. We come to you who set your people free. We come to you who guides us into the way of peace. We come to you as we journey through Advent and prepare to welcome, once again, the Christ child. Amen.</p>
	<p>Readings</p> <p>Malachi 3:1-4 Luke 3:1-6</p> <p><i>respond</i> For the word of the Lord</p> <p>Thanks be to God</p>
	<p>We say Sorry</p> <p>There are signs of God and we are blind to them, there are voices that cry out and we close our ears to them. There are signs of people's need and we do not see them, and cries of those in pain and we pass them by.</p> <p>There are signs of God's kingdom to be seen, and the voice of the Holy Spirit to be heard: O God, forgive us when we ignore you and ignore our neighbours, near and far. Amen.</p> <p>Assurance of forgiveness</p> <p>God spoke through Zechariah, saying, 'Tell the people: they will be saved by the forgiveness of their sins.' God's promises endure for ever and ever; so, let us be assured, our sins are forgiven. Amen.</p>
	<p>Hymn/song</p> <p>TIS #636 – "God has spoken to his people"</p>

Reflection

Police are called to an apartment block.
 Neighbours tell them there has been a horrendous fight going on.
 As they approach, they hear a voice yelling things like
 I'm going to kill you, stay still and I'm going to pumple you to death
 And then, a high-pitched scream.

As police break down the door, they find a lone, distressed man, standing on a table.
 As he explained, he's just frightened of spiders.
 I guess everyone has his or her own concept of what is important in life.

A woman at a garage sale tells the owner, my husband will be angry if I stay here too long.
 The owner laughs, just think of the bargains you might find.
 Yes, says the lady,
 But my hubby is in the car, I think his ankle is broken
 I'm on my way to the hospital to get him looked at.
 I guess everyone has his or her own concept of what is important in life.

Each Christmas is an important time in our year in our lives
but sometimes we get our priorities wrong.

The second Sunday in Advent

leads to the seemingly increasingly rapid countdown to Christmas.

We can see it in the changes around us.

More and more Christmas decorations are popping up around the place;
community carol singing events are happening;
Christmas party season is in full swing.

And in today's readings,

we are reminded once more that

the Advent season is more than just preparing for and remembering the birth of Christ.

We are reminded that Advent is also about preparing ourselves

for the second coming of Jesus

and the fulfilment of the kingdom of God that comes with that.

We are in that time of waiting

that time between Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection

and the full realisation of the Kingdom of God.

It is the resolution of the 'now but not yet'

that is the kingdom of God,

and the completion of the reconciliation of all things to God.

This time of waiting is a time of preparation,

of getting ourselves ready in the 'now but not yet'.

John came out of the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance

for the forgiveness of sins. He was the one preparing the way.

John was calling those who heard him to repentance

to prepare the way for the coming of the Kingdom of God;

to make a way for people to see and know the salvation of God.

John is calling all those who heard him to repent

to turn around – to have a dramatic change of mind and direction.

So, to repent is to turn away from the practices of the old age

from the world – the idolatry, violence, injustice, exploitation...

the broken world that we live in,

and turn towards the values and practices of the Kingdom of God

the love, the peace, the kindness, the justice, dignity, freedom, and abundance

all that comes with a healed and reconciled world.

In our Advent preparations, we too are called to repent,

to turn away from the ways of this broken world,

and to turn back to God.

Far beyond putting up our Christmas trees and laying out our nativity sets,

today's Gospel reading reminds us of what our Advent preparations should include

to prepare for the coming of Christ by confessing our sins,

and by repenting – by turning away from the ways of the world and turning back to God.

We are called to make our paths straight,
 to change our lives and be open to Christ changing our lives
 as we prepare the way for the salvation of God
 to be seen in and through us in the community around us
 so that those around us might know the love of God in their lives.

It's like that television show called Extreme Makeover
 The family have endured incredible hardship
 And friends and the tv crew send them off on a holiday.
 When they return, their home,
 and we assume their lives have been rebuilt.

John the Baptist wanted people to understand
 that the coming of the Messiah would mean the coming of Extreme Makeover.
 And that day is still to come—
 a day when the poor will no longer be oppressed,
 a day when the hungry will be fed,
 a day when the world will no longer take up arms,
 a day when children will no longer live in fear.
 And you and I are called to participate in that makeover.

Are you willing to do your part?
 Or are you satisfied to participate only in that part of Christmas
 that feeds our desire for parties and presents and pleasant thoughts
 and cares little about the plight of our neighbours and our world?
 If so, then the prophet says it is time to repent.
 The King is coming.
 Prepare, ye, the way of the Lord.
 God has spoken to His people.

Amen

	<p>Hymn/song ATO# 311 — “Be still and know that I am your God” TIS #526 (AHB #451) - “Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us...”</p>
	<p>Offering</p> <p>OFFERTORY SENTENCE This is our prayer: that our gifts may be tools of preparation, making the pathways to peace and justice free and clear.</p> <p>OFFERTORY PRAYER This is our prayer: that as our love overflows in the offering of ourselves and our resources, things will even out: everyone can have a smooth path and enjoy the fragrant shade of compassion. God bless these gifts and us with them. Amen.</p>
	<p>Notices</p>

	<p>Prayers for all people <i>Response after each sentence:</i> May they find their way to your love, and rejoice at their place in your heart.</p> <p>Loving God, we pray for those crying out from the wilderness of abandonment. We pray for those crying out from the wilderness of neglect. We pray for those crying out from the wilderness of addiction. We pray for all those crying out of any kind of wilderness today. Amen.</p> <p>.</p>
	<p>Hymn/song P&W 449 — “Make way” — Kendrick TIS #289 - “Christmas is coming” — Bell</p>
	<p>We are sent out May the road we travel be smooth and straight, every rut filled in, every bump smoothed out, any diversions easy to navigate, any obstacles easy to manoeuvre round. May good companions share our journey, and may we be voices for good in the world, a sign of Jesus’ love for all. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.</p> <p>May the Lord bless us and keep us May His face shine upon us and be gracious to us May he lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace</p>
	<p>Benediction</p>
	<p>Thank you</p>

ⁱ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#). (1989). (Mal 3:1–4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

ⁱⁱ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#). (1989). (Lk 3:1–6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.