

**Bulletin for Sunday 12th December 2021**

Good Morning, Friends, on the third Sunday in Advent (I hope you can imagine an Advent wreath with three red candles alight.....)

We pause as we prepare to worship..... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Joy to the world, the Lord is come (R&S 135)

Prayer: God of love, help us to pause and feel the joy...  
even though we are anxious and tired...  
As we prepare for your coming into our world  
may the good news of your messengers -  
whether prophets, angels, evangelists or stars -  
stir us to new life and fresh awareness of you.  
We ask your blessing on everything that we do,  
and everything that we give, in your service,  
now and always. In Jesus' name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Luke chapter 3: verses 7-18

Reflection: Why did the crowds follow John into the wilderness? To be told that they were a brood of vipers? Surely not. But I find John's personalised answers to members of the crowd impressive. Rather like a newspaper or magazine advice column answering a question from a particular reader, and yet doing it publicly, in such a way that all the readership (or all the crowd, in John's case) can benefit.

John gave specific advice to tax collectors for living ethically in their context; and advice to soldiers which really applied only to their professional circumstances. He explained what the relatively rich should do, despite the fact that many listening to him surely had only one coat and no spare food. Yet from these very specific instructions, which weren't applicable to most of his listeners, the people were able to understand the wider picture, and how it affected them. They weren't confused when other people asked, 'What should we do?', but gradually realised that there were principles behind his answers: to be right with God, everyone had to share and to be mindful of each other's needs.

“So... he proclaimed the good news to the people” we are told.  
What then should we do? How can we be a sign of the good news in our everyday lives?  
Surely the principle of caring for each other’s needs is what God looks for from us, too...  
this Christmas and always.

Hymn:            Make way, make way for Christ the King    (R&S 141)

Prayer:            Compassionate God, the world is full of needy people:  
we pray, as we sing, for broken hearts to be healed,  
and for those who mourn to be comforted.  
As we await, once again, the coming of Christ,  
we hold before you those who find this time of year hard  
and pray that they find the support they need.  
We hold before you the sick, the homeless, the lonely,  
and all who find the uncertainty of the future difficult.  
We pray for our communities and our loved ones.  
Loving God, hear all our prayers,  
spoken and unspoken, in Jesus’ name.    Amen

Hymn:            Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes            (R&S 137)

Blessing:            May we welcome the Prince of Peace this Christmas;  
and may the blessing of God  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with us and with all those we love  
now and always.    Amen

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There will be a ‘ Sunday at Six ’service on Zoom at 6pm - all welcome.

We all have a part to play in caring for each other and doing what we can to keep everyone safe from Covid. That includes wearing masks, giving people space and remembering to have plenty of ventilation. The URC has issued updated advice again this week, as the situation keeps changing (see <https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3989-covid-plan-b-synod-moderators-updated-guidance>). Please also let us know if you have a positive Covid test after recently being in church. I’m sure you understand that it’s impossible to make our churches entirely risk-free, however much we would wish to.

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