



St. Jude's Church
Stony Hill

Our Hope and Expectation
Daily Reflections for Advent & Christmas 2021

Readings for the Second Sunday of Advent, Year C

Sunday 05 December The Collect

Merciful God, who sent Your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Monday 06 December Malachi 3:1-4

Tuesday 07 December Luke 1:68-79

Wednesday 08 December Philippians 1:3-11

Thursday 09 December Luke 3: 1-6

Friday 10 December Luke 3: 1-6

Saturday 11 December Hymn #453 (CPWI)



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The Second Sunday of Advent, Year C
05 December 2021

Take heed!

The Collect: Merciful God, who sent Your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way to our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Reflection: Haven't we all failed to obey God in some way or another at some point in our lives? Failed to hear His Word and act upon it? Failed to spend time with Him as He so longingly desires? Haven't we put people and things ahead of Him though they are less important and useless for our salvation? This is not what God desires from us. He says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15) and it is through our obedience to God that we show our love for and gratitude to Him. Attending church regularly, engaging in Bible study and being active on church committees and in church, cannot make up for our disobedience.

The Lord does seek us out when we are not in a close intimate relationship with Him. God loves us and He is ready to act, once we call upon Him. The reality is that the more you put into your

relationship with God, the more you get out of it. A deeper relationship with God helps you grow in wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, discernment and knowledge. Why would you not walk closer to God?

God continues to send messengers and prophets to ensure we heed the warnings to prepare the way for our salvation. He is a God of many chances and gives us chance after chance to get it right. As we approach another Christmas, in the midst of the turmoil of the pandemic, let us reflect and do all we can to prepare our hearts for the second coming of Christ who is light and peace and joy.

Meditation: During this season of Advent, let us ponder on the true message of the season and maintain the right posture for repentance.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for continuing to send reminders and resources for us to heed Your warnings. Open our ears and our hearts to Your Word. **Amen.**

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05 December 2021



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Monday of the Second Week of Advent, Year C
06 December 2021

A direct line

Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

Scripture: "See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me... The messenger of the covenant...indeed, he is coming...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..." (Malachi 3:1, 3)

Reflection: We are all aware of the character and goodness of God: His gracious nature; His loving kindness; His gentle guidance; His firm but tender compassion. The first verses of Malachi 3 reflect God's persistent efforts in ensuring there are endless opportunities available to us, to come to know Him and live in Him.

From the beginning of time, the Lord has wanted a close and intimate relationship with us. We see Him in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve and are familiar with what happened next with the inhabitants of the garden and how their sin separated man from God. Since that time, God has been looking out for us, His people, a part of His creation. In Jeremiah 29:11, He declares,

“For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” As the God of love, He sometimes uses the most unlikely sources to get our attention and His message across: Abraham (an old man), Moses (a stutterer), Saul (a former persecutor of Christians). We have to be alert and discerning, pay attention to the message, not discounting the messenger. Believe it or not He can use you and me too. Are you willing and ready?

In addition to working directly through people, God sometimes used miracles and wonders which were purposeful in advancing the message of His kingdom - parting the Red Sea, manna from heaven, stilling the storm, and, the Resurrection. By these actions, the faith of many was affirmed and non-believers were able to experience His power and might.

God plays His part, perfectly. We must therefore play our part by following and keeping His commands and showing our love for Him through our obedience. The only way to find and witness the power of God in our lives is to cultivate a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, spend time in the Word, with the desire and intention to become more like Him. His peace will envelop us even during these trying times.

As we prepare our hearts in this Advent season, let us walk closer to Him, read more of His Word, pray more sincerely, forgive more, love deeper, reach out and touch someone in need of kindness. God has shown us time and time again that He wants us. Let us ensure He knows we want Him.

Meditation: The extent of the refining and purifying process is up to us. God has given us all the tools necessary to come into His Kingdom. How harshly will He have to judge us on that day?

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for all Your kindness. We know we are loved. **Amen.**

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Our Hope and Expectation
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Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent, Year C
07 December 2021

The attributes of God

Reading: Luke 1: 68-79

Scripture: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty saviour for us in the house of his servant David..." (Luke 1: 68-70)

Reflection: Have you ever really thought about how God has NEVER failed on a promise? We promise a friend to deliver an item and then we experience an illness, a memory lapse, a transportation issue and there goes the promise! There are most time valid reasons for not delivering on a promise and most time, those whom we have promised, understand, though they may be disappointed.

Not so with God, He never disappoints. He delivers every time. He is the same today as He was yesterday, and we know that He will be the same tomorrow and always. Yet even as we sometimes vacillate between hot, cold and lukewarm in our worship of Him, even though we are often distracted by the idols we create, His love for us does not change. Despite our detours and distractions, He always finds ways of drawing us to Him, providing various

avenues, messengers, signs and experiences to direct us back to Him. What a consolation!

God deserves our trust. He is omnipotent - all powerful - He is omnibenevolent - all loving - and despite the fact that we disappoint Him over and over again, He lovingly offers us a way back. He is omnipresent - everywhere - and knows every situation we find ourselves in, protecting and guiding us always. He is omniscient - all knowing - and though He is ever present, He knows beyond what can be seen, into our hearts and minds, our thoughts and intentions.

As we use this season of Advent to prepare our hearts for Christ's second coming, let us remember all that He is and does, to and for us. Let us seek His peace and leave our anxieties, our fears and doubts completely in His hands. He has always been by our side and will continue to be.

Meditation: Let us not take for granted the magnitude and greatness of our God and the fact that we always have a direct line to Him.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Your greatness is unmatched. We thank You for loving and protecting us, always. **Amen.**

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Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent, Year C
08 December 2021

Are you a Sunday Christian?

Reading: Philippians 1: 3-11

Scripture: "I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now." (Philippians 1: 3-5)

Reflection: Paul's letter to the believers in Philippi was written while he was in prison, facing death for his beliefs and preaching about Jesus Christ. Believing he was about to die for his faith, Paul was no doubt anxious and desirous to get his message out to those who had been sharing in the gospel with him from the early days of his mission. Paul knew the Philippians to be more than mere church goers or generous givers. They not only embraced the gospel, they lived it, loving their neighbours, actively committed to its cause, confirming and defending its contents. They were effective and dynamic disciples.

Paul's confidence that the Lord would continue His work with the Philippians must have been such a comfort to him, despite his dark circumstances. Assured of his own salvation, Paul was encouraging the Philippians that after seeing them in action and knowing them to be a true example, he was confident of their

salvation. In fact, he begins his letter to the Philippians by saying he thanks God every time he remembers them.

Are we every-day Christians like the Philippians? Can others confidently say the Lord has been working and continues to work in our lives changing and transforming us from the inside out, just as Paul believed of the Philippians? Is it evident that we are defenders of the gospel, living accordingly? Are we embracing the fact that He has our current circumstances surrounding the pandemic, under His control? Are we experiencing the peace that comes with trusting in Him completely? As we begin the new church year, are there any changes we need to make to ensure we are good stewards of the gospel? Is the Lord working in and on us?

Meditation: When people look at us, do they see Christ? Do they see a Christian that is a protector of the gospel?

Prayer: Dear Lord, continue to guide us in Your ways, so that others may see You in us. **Amen.**

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08 December 2021



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Thursday of the Second Week of Advent, Year C
09 December 2021

Repent!

Reading: Luke 3: 1-6

Scripture: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee...during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins..." (Luke 3: 1-3)

Reflection: Luke begins chapter 3 with a list of the political and religious hierarchy, and this was not a mistake. Israel had fallen politically and religiously and the coming of Christ was imminent. If we look back at Genesis 49:10, we will see it was prophesied "The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from "between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his."

It was time for Jesus to come and take His rightful place.

In His truly gracious and ever-loving fashion, God sent John the Baptist to prepare His people. Like the kings of ancient times, a herald would go before him, to ensure it was safe for him to visit, make recommendations for any necessary changes and allow the

people time to effect the repairs, all in an effort to ensure that everything was just right, for the king's arrival.

John the Baptist did just that; he preached the message that God's judgment was coming and, for persons to prepare for the judgment, they were to repent of their sins, be baptized, and only then would they be ready for the judgement. John spoke to all classes in the society. His message was one of inclusion. Salvation was free and would be available to all, but alas, not all would heed the call.

We can take heart that the Lord will never send judgement upon us without giving us a chance to make it right. However, we have also been warned, "no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father". The time is now to get ourselves right before God.

Meditation: We have been warned; now is the time to draw close to God, if we haven't already done so. He is the only way.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for being such a gracious God, helping us always to prepare for Your second coming. May we be alert and live our lives in readiness for that time. **Amen.**

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Friday of the Second Week of Advent, Year C
10 December 2021

Why him?

Reading: Luke 3: 1-6

Scripture: "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, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. " (Luke 3:1-3)

Reflection: A list of biblical royalty: Tiberius, Pilate, Heron, Caiphas, yet the Word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, a lowly commoner. Though John's father was a priest, and his mother was a relative of Mary, John did not have any political or religious clout. His fame was being born to old parents who had passed childbearing age. That was where his journey began, through prophecy. We will remember that Zechariah asked the angel how he could be sure that his wife, Elizabeth, would surely bear a child at her age and he was struck dumb until the day John was born. From as far back as his parents' story, God was preparing this youngster for one of the most important missions in the history of the story of Christ and the salvation of mankind.

We continue to be reminded that God often chooses the unlikely to execute His plan. No one is unworthy for Him, no one is too lowly

to be used. And we should always have that in the forefront of our minds when we deem ourselves unworthy or begin judging our brothers and sisters thinking God cannot or will not use them for greatness. Psalm 138:6 again calls to mind that "For though the Lord is high, He regards the lowly."

The Lord does not discount the shortcomings of biblical characters, he doesn't ignore their flaws. Through them we are empowered to shake off our unworthiness, our insecurities, knowing that through Him and with Him, we can transform ourselves and those around us. No matter how dismal the situation seems, we can do great work. Let us be heartened that although we are living through a pandemic, there is work to be done by us, it CAN be done. It WILL be done. God can use you; God can use me. God can and will use anyone. Are you available now?

Meditation: No one is above being used by God. As we look around, let us search for the good in our sisters and brothers and let them see God in us.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You that You continue to use ordinary people for Your glory. Equip and use me as You will Lord. **Amen.**

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**Saturday of the Second Week of Advent, Year C
11 December 2021**

Channels of God's Peace

Hymn: 'Make me a channel of Your peace' (CPWI Hymnal # 453)

Verse 1: Make me a channel of Your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring Your love;
where there is injury, Your pardon, Lord;
and where there's doubt, true faith in You.

Refrain: O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love with all my soul.

Reflection: Lord, make us channels of Your peace, now, more than ever, as living with Covid-19 and the related restrictions, are enough to chip away at our sanity. We appreciate the rules and regulations that those who lead us have put in place for the safety and security of all, but the absence of human contact, the inability to plan with certainty, is destabilizing and too much for us to bear.

But, it is especially during this time that we are in need of and search desperately for peace, consolation, understanding and love. 2 Corinthians 9:6 says, "The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." When we give, even in a time of our own needs, we receive abundantly. What more and how can you give in these trying times?

The hymnwriter, calls upon the Lord to make us channels of His peace. knowing that in our own human strength this can be a challenge. It is not an easy task, as being instruments of peace means we are not only seeking peace but also desire to take it with us and spread it wherever we go. As we all face our individual challenges, peace is sometimes elusive but, grounded in His love we persevere, for we know that the Lord will never leave us. He provides us with the needed strength and discernment.

As we prepare our hearts for the Lord's second coming, let us examine our actions and seek more to give than to receive; paradoxically, it is in giving that we receive. We can use the hymn as a blueprint and seek out those in need of consolation, and offer that consolation. We can seek out those who need love, and share love. In doing so we are stewards of the Lord's kingdom as we spread His peace and love wherever we go.

Meditation: The Lord will impart to us the strength and discernment for each of the situations in which we find ourselves.

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, we thank You for speaking to us through song. May we always be reminded that there is work to be done, and that in You we can always find the strength to carry on. **Amen.**

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