

**Welcome: - Advent Liturgy – “Hush the noise”**

Preparations underway, shifting focus each new day, Amidst the darkness looking for the light, For the truth among the mess. O hush the noise, **Let's hear the angels sing.**

Looking for the messengers who bring the light, Isaiah – prophet and ancient poet And John who came to point the way. O hush the noise, **Let's hear the angels sing.**

Angels, messengers of today, Truth tellers for this present age, Those who now show us the way. O hush the noise, **Let's hear the angels sing. Amen**

This week we focus on the prophets: messengers from both the Old and New Testaments who received a vision for a new way. The symbol for this week, a lightbulb, commonly represents a new idea. We ask how we can continue the legacy of the prophets today.

**Sing Verse 2: It Came upon a midnight clear (STF 205)**

**Light 2 Candles**

*Lighting two Candles on our Advent ring, invite the congregation to pause and think about who the truth-tellers in your life or community are, and how could we pay attention to them.*

**Pray to Finish:** The Angels are still singing; prophets are still speaking. Hush the noise, hear them sing, repeat the song, and be blessed in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Prayers**

Living God, We remember this day how you prepared the way of your coming: how to Abraham you promised blessing for all the world through his offspring. How to your prophets you spoke your word, promising the messiah would come, bringing peace, justice and deliverance for all your people. How to Mary you promised a child, who would be called Emmanuel, God with us, born to save his people from their sins. And we remember also how, through John the Baptist, you announced the fulfilment of those prophecies in the person of Jesus, the light of the world, shining in the darkness. Help us now, to open our hearts and minds to the guidance of your Holy Spirit, and respond to his promising. Above all help us to follow in the way of Christ, loving him as he has loved us. You promise us that Christ will come again, prepare our hearts for his coming. **Amen.**

**Prayer of Confession: -**

Saviour Christ, We remember today that through your people longed for your coming, Many were not prepared to welcome you, Failing to recognise you when you come. Lord, **Have Mercy**

Forgive us that we are equally closed sometimes to your coming into our lives, Forcing you into a mould we have made for you, Presuming your thoughts and your ways are the same as ours. Lord, **Have Mercy.**

Forgive us that our expectations are small and limited, Shaped by looking at life from a human rather than eternal perspective. Lord, **Have Mercy.**

*We pause for a few moments to bring confessions of heart and mind to God...*

Hear the gracious words of Christ, to all who truly repent and believe in him, “Your sins are forgiven”.

So gracious God, help us to be prepared To examine ourselves Our words and deeds Thoughts and attitudes And to live each day open to what you would do in us and through us. Loving and Gracious God **Amen.**

**Hymn: - STF 169 – Come thou long expected Jesus**

1 Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free,  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.

2 Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.

3 Born thy people to deliver,

born a child and yet a king,  
born to reign in us for ever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

4 By thine own eternal Spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit  
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

**Readings: -**

**Philippians 1: 3 – 11:**

<sup>3</sup> Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. <sup>4</sup> Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, <sup>5</sup> for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. <sup>6</sup> And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. <sup>7</sup> So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. <sup>8</sup> God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. <sup>10</sup> For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. <sup>11</sup> May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ<sup>[a]</sup>—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.

**Luke 3:1-6**

It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas was ruler<sup>[a]</sup> over Galilee; his brother Philip was ruler<sup>[b]</sup> over Iturea and Traconitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene. <sup>2</sup> Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. <sup>4</sup> Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!  
<sup>5</sup> The valleys will be filled, and the mountains and hills made level The curves will be straightened, and the rough places made smooth. <sup>6</sup> And then all people will see the salvation sent from God.'"

**Sermon: -**

Have you ever watched a Painter and Decorator at Work. It seems to me that Preparation is the key to success in painting. Making sure the holes are filled, the walls are smooth – creating the perfect environment for the new paint to look at its best. Along with Preparation – comes Waiting. Waiting for the paint to dry, waiting for the Poly filler to go off. Preparation, Painting and Waiting.

Advent too is a season of Preparation, Waiting, and anticipation of the coming King. Likewise John the Baptist is a voice crying ...“*prepare the way of the lord*”. Advent then is a time to **Sand down** our Lives, To prepare our bodies, minds and spirits For Jesus the light of the world, to enter in again. A time when every mountain, every valley Will be filled with the Holy Spirit of the Lord.

The promise of Advent, that by becoming human, God committed his whole self – to the WHOLE of humanity. Because of, and THROUGH, CHRIST – All can be Saved. That, simply means, Jesus didn't come for just you and me, but for ALL. Jesus isn't our little secret, Our Private possession, And he certainly isn't our privilege. Jesus is for ALL people, ALL over the World, To know, to Love, to be in relationship with, Shining a great light into the darkness of our world. Just this week, with rising energy prices we learnt again that some this Christmas will struggle to put money on their electricity Meter Key's, because their universal credit hasn't kicked in. The light will literally be out of reach for them, so how do we shout about the coming king, the prince of peace, LIGHT OF THE WORLD, in that context, which may be different from our lived experience. *So we hear The Baptist's cry . . . Prepare ye the way of the Lord*

In Luke's account, emperors, governors, rulers, and high priests — the folks who wield power, *don't* hear God, but **the outsider from the wilderness does**. God is calling you in from the wilderness to fulfil his call, to share Christ the Light of the world, in our time, in this place, in our community. Advent is also time to evaluate, to watch & to wait, that we might hear from God, prompting and guiding us to new ways of **being and doing**, for the kingdom. The Baptism that John is shouting about is much more than just a surface clean – ‘**cil-it-Bang and Sin is Gone**’ –he implores us, to take a long hard look at ourselves and the world we inhabit. The Good news for us and all the world is that God's spirit is constantly transforming and changing and challenging us to live lives worthy of Christ entering the world, as a Baby, yet a King, full of Love for ALL the world.

Have you ever found yourselves in a Barren or Wilderness place? Places like that can be disorientating, and you can find yourselves scrambling around, trying to locate the way you should be going. And then all of a sudden, you become more aware of the rough ground beneath your feet as you struggle down twisty and crooked paths. In the passage today, Luke shares God's dream for this wilderness landscape – a place reimagined, where the landscape becomes smooth, twisted roads become straight and all people can see the beauty, and glory of God's Salvation, through Christ. In other versions of this story, we hear that crowds streamed into the wilderness, to hear more from the voice shouting and calling out to them.

Maybe that's where we are, at the moment, in these times? We find ourselves in a place of wilderness, and God is calling us to watch, wait and repent. Maybe we need to humble ourselves, fall to our feet, and to become aware again of our need to receive love, care support and direction from God. Maybe God is calling us to place of wilderness in order to do just that – that we might allow God to reveal his mercy, grace and renewal, on us and on our communities of faith, across Dorset South and West Circuit. We are here to prepare the way of the Lord... to build his kingdom... to actively love and serve him. *So we hear The Baptist's cry . . . Prepare ye the way of the Lord*

This Advent we must let go of our sins and anything else in our hearts that holds us back from having space for the Christ, the child, to enter in, with his great light of Love, Hope and Peace. I suspect that is only after we truly step into the wilderness, that we learn again, in a deep and profound way, of our need for the ONE who is coming! So we must find ways of pausing in our busyness and in the midst of wilderness experience – that our hearts might be prepared for Christ again. Only then we will truly encounter once more, Christ, Immanuel, God with us.

**THIS IS:** Good news, not just for them, long ago, but for us today. Good news, powerful enough to change our lives, and to change the world. Good news, so moving that it can transform the world to love God once again. Good news that God so loves the world that this advent he sends his son, born a baby, but yet our

king, wonderful counselor, mighty savior, prince of peace. It is time to light the path, for Christ will come again. So hear the Baptist's cry . . . Prepare ye the way of the Lord. AMEN.

### **Prayers of Intercession**

*Let us pray.*

Come to your world as King of the nations. We pray for . . . *parts of the world torn apart by War, and natural disasters, and we pray for the leaders of the world that they will seek peace and justice for all the people they serve.* Before you rulers will stand in silence. Come, Lord Jesus. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to your Church as Lord and Judge. We pray for . . . *For our Circuit, and our newly matched minister the Revd Helen Harrell who will join the Ministry team in September 2025. We pray for our brothers and sisters in Uploders and Bere Heath Methodist Churches as they close over the coming months.* Help us to live in the light of your coming and give us a longing to do your will. Come, Lord Jesus. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to your people as Saviour and bearer of pain. We pray for . . . *for all people, places and situations that are close to our hearts and minds this day.* Enfold us all in your love and mercy, wipe away the tears of failure, fear and distress, and set us free to serve you for ever. Come to us from heaven with power and great glory, and lift us up to meet you, where with all your saints and angels, we will live with you for ever. Come, Lord Jesus. **Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer: -**

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray: **Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And Lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, The power and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.**

### **Blessing**

Prepare the way of the Lord.  
Make a Path for our God in the Desert.

The crooked shall become straight,  
Rough places shall become plain.

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed;  
All people shall see it together.

This is the promise of the Lord;  
God's promise shall be fulfilled.

The Blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Be with you,  
With those you love,  
And those you are called to Love,  
Now, in the name of Christ.  
Amen.