



South Wye Team Ministry Newsletter

8th December 2024

2nd Sunday of Advent

Hello Everyone, I hope that you are all keeping safe and well.

In terms of the church year, we are now well into Advent season. Ideally this is a quiet and important time of waiting for, preparing for the arrival of Christ. In practice for many of us, this season is overlaid with a time of more or less frantic shopping and preparing for the arrival of visitors. It is also a month of lunches and catching up with old friends, former colleagues and neighbours and family, of sharing stories and memories and for conversations that start “do you remember so-and-so?” Whilst we look forward, we are looking back.

The stories that we tell over all those Christmas lunches can sometimes be a little vague. We aren't quite sure how long it is since the events happened – or we can't really believe how long it is! People of our own age, are, unaccountably, looking much older. People who we think of as children turn up as adults with children of their own. Looking back and looking forward overlap again in our storytelling.

The stories that we tell one another matter. They help us to settle our memories, our relationships, tell us about where we came from and to talk about where we might be going, even when they aren't too specific about when exactly the events occurred. “When I was a lad...”, “back in the day...”, “when my grandmother was a girl...”, “in some king's reign...” Phrases that set the scene for those stories when absolute precision about dates is not as important as a common understanding about our forebears, our joint story, how we got to here.

In the Gospel for the second Sunday of Advent we are given a different sort of story. Luke is very definitely wanting us to understand about our joint story, to know how we got here – but he has absolutely no room for “back in the day” or “in some king's reign.” Luke wants us to know that this story took place in this king's reign. At this time, specifically, this happened. As well as giving some veracity to the story, it also underlines the importance of the events.

At the centre of this story is big, proper news. “The word of God came to John.” What an amazing thing to happen. And John responds amazingly – He has been given the word of God and he speaks that word. His words are placed firmly in the context of scripture – he is fulfilling prophecy as he speaks the words and he is foretelling the arrival of the one who is the living Word of God.

This is the beginning of one of the central stories of our family. A story to help us to understand how we got here. Amongst all of the funny, sad, wistful stories that we will be sharing over lunches this season, I wonder if there is space for us to also share the stories that set the scene for the season. Who could you tell the story of Advent and Christmas to?

With every blessing, Anne
07864938898
rector@stmartinshereford.org.uk

Family and Community News

How do you get to Church?

Do you drive, walk, cycle or perhaps you are unable to get here? Whatever your situation, there may be small changes we could make, to help the environment and each other.

If you drive, would you consider giving someone a lift (we know many of you already do)?

If you walk or cycle would you consider walking with someone for company?

Would *you* like a lift or someone to walk with?

If the answer is 'Yes' to any of these questions, please get in touch with a member of the Eco Church Team or Church office, and we can arrange a match.

Sarah, Peter and Dafydd (Eco Church Team)

Toastie and Warm at St Martin's *Will be in St. Martin's Hall on 10th December*

On Tuesday afternoons the Narthex at St Martin's is a busy and welcoming space.

From 1pm there is a Bible Study group, all welcome.

From 2pm there is a coffee afternoon, full of conversations and information, with chocolate biscuits and, usually, home-made cakes.

Everyone is welcome to come along to any – or all – parts of the afternoon.

Catching up with friends – or making new ones!

Young at Heart - First Thursday of each month – Lunch at the Wye Inn (contact the office so that we can book the table)

Third Thursday of each month at 2pm – Meeting in St. Martin's Church – talks, games, refreshments and friendship – everyone welcome!

Making Room is a new initiative based at St Martin's which, whilst it will not offer any formal professional mental health treatment, will offer a safe space to express any worries you may have.

Making Room is intended for people of working age, and is about making room to have safe discussions about our mental wellness, making room to support one another, making room for mindfulness and to start or share any hobbies and interests and making room to offer hope. If you are interested in joining us please contact us and we can discuss plans further. If you wish to volunteer equally please do get in touch. Rev'd Lauren Bell curate@stmartinshereford.org.uk 07429 862444

Services at Belmont Community Centre

If you live in or near Belmont and find the journey to St Martin's difficult, or if Sunday mornings are not easy for you, you might like to join us for Friday Communion at Belmont Community Centre.

We celebrate a said service of Holy Communion at 12:30pm on the Second and Fourth Fridays of each month, following FoodShare. Everyone is very welcome to this service. The hall has level access and good ventilation – and if the weather is good we celebrate outside.

The next services at Belmont are: 12.30pm Holy Communion – 13th December (no communion on the 27th December)

For our Prayers

Those who are ill or in need of your prayers, including:

Brenda Bayliss Maureen Gerard Irene F

Those who have died and those who mourn their loss:

Jen B. Mila Mills

Anglican Communion: Episcopal Church of Sudan

Hereford: Telford Severn Gorge Deanery

Porvoo: England: Chester; Finland: Kuopio.

South Wye: Please pray for our emergency service workers especially firefighters, paramedics, police officers and PCSO's.

The Wider View:

- HIV continues to be a significant health factor in Tanzania: pray that present progress in dealing with this may be maintained, and for all who live with HIV to receive the treatment they need.
- International Anti-Corruption Day is on Monday: pray for the highest standards to be upheld in commerce, politics and all areas of social activity and interaction in our world.
- Human Rights Day and Animal Rights Day both fall on Tuesday. Pray for all whose human rights are routinely disregarded, including tribal and minority groups. Pray we may also respect, care for and value the animals within our charge and keeping.
- Thursday is the National Workplace Day of Remembrance. This is a time to remember all who lose their lives in the course of their work, and to pray for all whose work is dangerous or poorly regulated. The International Day of Neutrality this week prompts prayer for nations adopting a position of neutrality, that their decision may be respected at times of international tension and conflict.
- John of the Cross (Saturday) expressed his mystic faith in poetry, writing of his yearning for union with God, so that the Spirit could flow into him: give thanks for his vision, and for all Christian poets.

From Christian Aid Advent Prayers

A prayer for peace

God of peace-making, peace-building, peace-restoring

As we remember those for whom peace is a far-off memory

Whose daily bread is conflict, uncertainty and fear

Grant that we who have safe beds and secure homes

Would also have the courage not just to speak peace, to keep peace

But to build peace, wherever we are. Amen

Services on-site, online and on TV and Radio For the week beginning 8th December

South Wye Services Through the Week:

8pm Night Prayer from Common Worship – on St. Martin's Facebook page

Sunday

9:30am Holy Communion at St. Martin's

11.15am Morning Prayer at St. Peter's

Thursday

10am Said Communion in St. Martin's Lady Chapel

The 9.30am service will be streamed on St. Martin's Facebook page and will be available on the St. Martin's and the St. Peter's Facebook pages and the St. Martin's YouTube channel later in the day.

Diocese of Hereford

Diocese of Hereford Facebook: Sunday Service 10am.

Church of England

National Weekly Service Facebook at 9am.

TV and Radio on Sunday;

Radio 4 8.10am Sunday Worship-Carols for the Christ Child

BBC 1 1.25pm Songs of Praise- Angels

Prayer for the day:

The Church of England website has audio and text of the Prayer for the Day.

Prayer for the Nation

The Archbishops continue to invite all to call on God in Prayer. We invite you to set aside time every evening to pray, particularly at 6pm each day. More than ever, this is a time when we need to love each other. Prayer is an expression of love. Find more details at churchengland.org/resources/prayer-nation

Collect for 2nd Sunday of Advent

Almighty God,
purify our hearts and minds,
that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as
judge and saviour
we may be ready to receive him,
who is our Lord and our God. Amen

Readings for 2nd Sunday of Advent

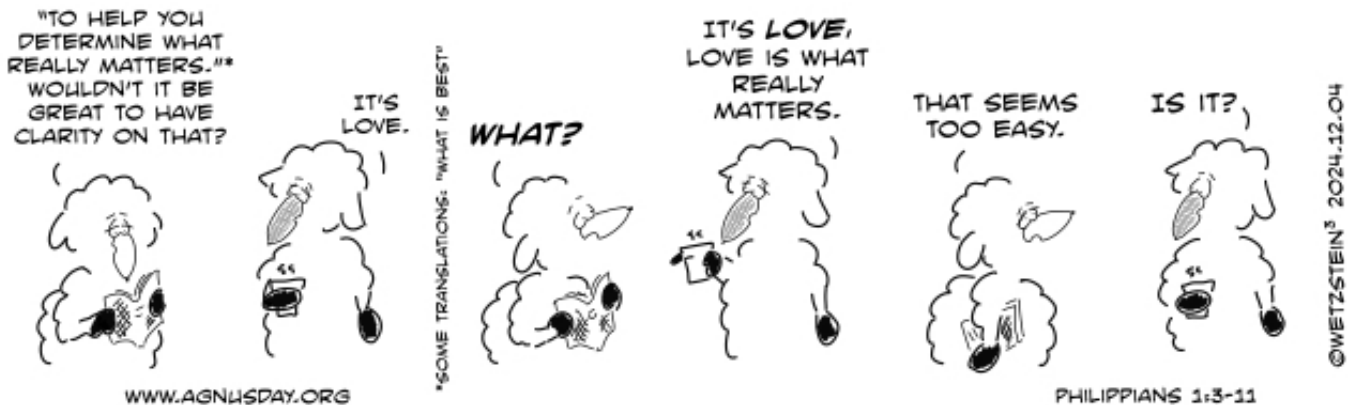
Malachi 3: 1-4

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.^[a] 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.

Philippians 1: 3-11

3 I thank my God every time I remember you, 4 constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, 5 because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart,^[a] for all of you share in God's grace^[b] with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. 8 For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10 to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11 having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.



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^[a] of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler^[b] of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler^[c] 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."

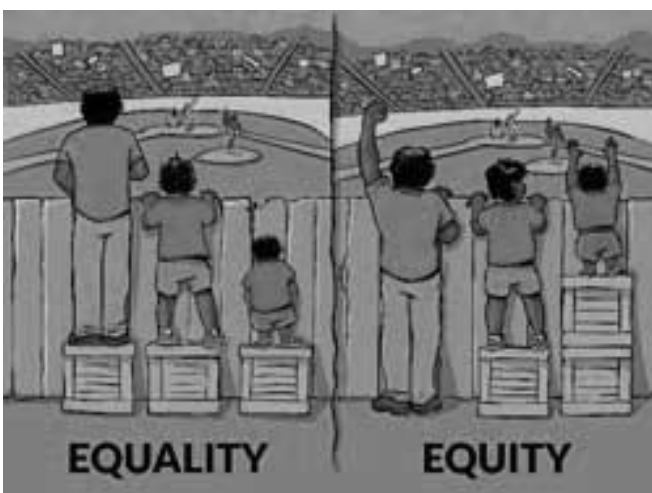
Bible Study based on Luke 3: 1-6

Traditionally, the point is made at Epiphany that Jesus was born as a sign and a gift for all people, not just the Jewish people. The same point is present in the characteristically Lukan use of 'all' in verse 6. Here is a preparing of the way for an understanding that God's salvation (through Jesus) is for all people and, arguably, all creation.

Luke's inclusion of the rogues gallery (vv.1-2) raises questions about the nature and scope of salvation. These characters could be seen as the sort of hateful people that Zechariah speaks of in the canticle reading. Commenting on this verse, Joel Green writes that, for Luke 'the reconciliation of God's people and deliverance from enemies are both part of one movement. For him, visions of salvation cannot be categorised as social or religious or political, for the epoch of peace is characterized by all of these' (Joel B Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Eerdmans, 1997 ISBN 978-0-8028-2315-1). So, salvation is in part a liberation from those who oppress and abuse. Paradoxically, it is also the gift offered to all people – including the unsavoury characters listed by Luke. There are challenges here for how we understand salvation, and how we pray for those who might be the contemporary equivalents of Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas, etc. There is a recurring theme in Luke of the levelling of social status – the humble exalted and the exalted humbled. When John quotes Isaiah, a picture is painted of the creation of a level playing field. The language is metaphorical and we need to be careful of interpreting it literally, but for people weighed down with worry and oppressed by injustice, this is profoundly hopeful. As noted above, John was preaching in physically the lowest place on earth. Present-day politicians talk a lot about levelling up. Here we have the forerunner of Jesus preparing the way for the one who will truly provide the means of transformation for all.

Reflection Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help. Many will remember Captain Sir Tom, who in 2020 (for his 100th birthday) walked to raise millions of pounds for the NHS. Some may also remember hearing about Kevin Sinfield, who ran seven marathons in seven days in support of his former rugby league teammate Rob Burrow, who had motor neurone disease. Neither of them needed to do what they did, but they were compelled to do so by their love and compassion for others. John the Baptizer didn't need to go into the wilderness as he did – or did he? Perhaps love and compassion compelled him, too. Perhaps, having experienced God's love and compassion for himself, he wanted to help others to see that, despite their sinful nature, God loved them with all and wanted them to know life in all its fullness. What about us – do we have love and compassion for our friends and family, and for our neighbours, and for the people we work with, spend leisure time with – enough to let them know about Jesus?

Questions for reflection



- Which is better: equality or equity? Indeed, what is the difference?
- Imagine that the fence shown was taken down – this might be labelled liberation. Which was John advocating? And Jesus?
- And where are we in this mix – are we for equality, or equity or liberation? How can we empower others to see that they can be freed from any oppression that they are feeling?

Sudoku

7								
		2	6		4	3		
				7	8		6	2
4				5			1	
					3			
	5					2	7	3
5	3			4				9
1				8	6	5		
				1	5			

	8			9				4
5							8	
2	1					5	9	
7		1	3		4			
					6			
				7			4	8
3	6							
1	5							7
		8	7			2	6	

7	6	9	5	3	2	8	4	1
8	1	2	6	9	4	3	5	7
3	4	5	1	7	8	9	6	2
4	2	3	7	5	9	6	1	8
6	7	1	8	2	3	4	9	5
9	5	8	4	6	1	2	7	3
5	3	6	2	4	7	1	8	9
1	9	7	3	8	6	5	2	4
2	8	4	9	1	5	7	3	6

6	8	3	1	9	5	7	2	4
5	7	9	4	2	3	6	8	1
2	1	4	8	6	7	5	9	3
7	2	1	3	8	4	9	5	6
8	4	5	9	1	6	3	7	2
9	3	6	5	7	2	1	4	8
3	6	7	2	5	8	4	1	9
1	5	2	6	4	9	8	3	7
4	9	8	7	3	1	2	6	5

Sudoku (Trickier)

			8			9		7
5						8		
		8						6
					3	2		
		6	4					1
	1		6					
4					5			
					8		1	
8				3	2			7

1						3		
		7	9				5	8
7	5				8		6	
9			2					
		3			1	2		
		8		1				5
			3					2
	4				6			

8	9	5	1	3	2	6	7	4
6	3	7	9	4	8	5	1	2
4	2	1	7	6	5	3	9	8
9	1	2	6	8	7	4	3	5
3	5	6	4	2	9	7	8	1
7	8	4	5	1	3	2	6	9
2	7	8	3	9	4	1	5	6
5	6	9	2	7	1	8	4	3
1	4	3	8	5	6	9	2	7

2	4	1	8	5	6	7	3	9
5	7	6	3	4	9	8	1	2
3	9	8	7	1	2	6	4	5
6	8	3	5	9	1	2	7	4
9	1	4	2	6	7	5	8	3
7	5	2	4	3	8	9	6	1
4	6	7	9	2	3	1	5	8
1	2	5	6	8	4	3	9	7
8	3	9	1	7	5	4	2	6

Wordsearch based on Malachi 3: 1-4

F U C W P P L Z O C Q A H P U
D W M O K A E D L O G T J R P
E P F E V D X D A Y S A K E P
B M I P R E L E R D S M Y P U
W W R R Z G N O E I R N G A R
M J E T E T K A G F A D N R I
E G Y D H V N H N X E N I E F
L N Y P Y G L E E T P A M N I
P I B L I Z I I S F P T O I E
M D E E N R W L S E A S C F R
E N F A D E D D E U R B Y E C
T E O S E L D Q M D W P W R W
O S R I E L L D Y X Q B I A B
A K E N D U N V U X S R A E Y
V H F G E F A B Q S I H T N U

**SENDING
SILVER
STAND
SUDDENLY
OLD**

**DELIGHT
PREPARE
PRESENT
REFINER
COVENANT**

**PURIFIER
COMING
BEFORE
DAYS
FULLER**

**MESSENGER
GOLD
APPEARS
TEMPLE
YEARS**

**INDEED
WAY
PLEASING
FIRE**