

Third Sunday of Advent

17 December 2023

Collect

Eternal God,
you sent John the Baptist
to prepare the way for the coming of your Son:
grant us wisdom to see your purpose
and openness to hear your will,
that we too may prepare the way for Christ
who is coming in power and glory
to establish his rule of peace and justice;
through Jesus Christ our Judge and our Redeemer,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading

Isaiah 61.1–4, 61.8–11

- ¹ The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
- ² to proclaim the year of the Lord 's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
- ³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord , to display his glory.
- ⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;

they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.
8 For I the Lord love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
9 Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.
10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

Psalm

The Song of Mary

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord:
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
Who has looked with favour on his lowly servant:
from this day all generations will call me blessed.
The Almighty has done great things for me:
and holy is his name.
God has mercy on those who fear him:
from generation to generation.
The Lord has shown strength with his arm:
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones:
and lifting up the lowly.

God has filled the hungry with good things:
and sent the rich away empty.
He has come to the aid of his servant Israel:
to remember the promise of mercy,
The promise made to our forebears:
to Abraham and his children for ever.

2nd Reading

1 Thessalonians 5.12–28

¹² But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; ¹³ esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. ¹⁵ See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil. ²³ May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. ²⁵ Beloved, pray for us. ²⁶ Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them. ²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Gospel

John 1.6–8, 1.19–28

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.
⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹ This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?'

²⁰ He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.'

²¹ And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.'

²² Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?'

²³ He said,

'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
"Make straight the way of the Lord" ',as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴ Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

²⁵ They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?'

²⁶ John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know,

²⁷ the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.'

²⁸ This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.