

To all members of the St James Traditional Services

A Weekly Word of Encouragement: Prepare the way of the Lord

Today is the 3rd Sunday in Advent – we are focused on the ministry of John the Baptist. Instead of an Old Testament Psalm, we reflect on a New Testament psalm.

Luke 1:67-79 – the song of Zechariah (father of John) that he spoke at his son’s naming and circumcision. Reflectively read Luke 1:67-79.

The theme of this song is Salvation: the salvation that God has achieved in the coming of Jesus.

“Praise be to the Lord” v. 68 (Benedictus is the name given to this song in the Prayer Book). Why? Because the Lord has come to His people, redeemed His people, saved His people (vv. 68, 69). Under divine inspiration, Zechariah is announcing Jesus’ coming. The time of fulfilment is dawning.

God keeps His promises (vv. 70-75). What He spoke through the prophets has been fulfilled; what He promised He has performed: A salvation greater than the defeat of national enemies - a salvation that brings forgiveness of sin and a liberty to serve God without fear.

The coming of John the Baptist (Zechariah’s son) brought to conclusion God’s Old Testament promises (vv. 76-79). He was not the saviour but a witness to the saviour and the salvation He brings: forgiveness of sins, freedom from the fear of death, and peace with God. **Jesus is “the rising sun from heaven”** (v.78) who brings forgiveness, light, peace. Truly John will say as he pointed to Jesus: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). (N.B. The Song of Zechariah (Benedictus) was sung after the New Testament reading at Morning Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer, enabling the congregation to praise God for the glorious fulfilment in Jesus of God’s promises.)

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, at your first coming you sent your messenger to prepare the way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise make ready your way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the ways of the righteous, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

Collect for Advent 3

Remember

- keep praying daily
- keep reading God's Word
- keep in touch with your Christian community at St James: Wednesday 10am; Sunday 9am, 11am, 6pm.
- take special note of our Christmas services

With Christian love,

Robert