

# **Hailsham Methodist Church**

## **Worship at Home**

### **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent: John the Baptist**

Jesus said, 'No one more important than John the Baptist has ever been born; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.' Amen. Come soon, Lord Jesus!

*If possible, and if you wish to, light a candle.*

#### **Hymn: Advent Candles Tell Their Story (StF 165, v1 & v3 only)**

Jesus is the light of the world. A light no darkness can ever put out.

#### **Hymn: Hills Of The North Rejoice (StF 172)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufsfurSpPmM>

#### **Advent Approach**

God of time and space, we are glad to be here. For in your company we belong, and this is a great mystery.

King of kings, we dimly understand your power. Light of life, we cannot hide from you. Saviour of the poor, we bear witness to your compassion. Word of truth, we submit to your wisdom. Flesh of our flesh, we know we are understood by you.

We, who so carelessly forget your will in our daily lives. We, whose hearts are so often filled with the wrong things. We, who so typically squeeze every minute out of these days to get the last present bought, the last call made, the preparations finalised.

But this time is for you and so let us stop. Let us still our buzzing heads, relax our weary bodies and breathe deeply with your breath.

In this moment, in this welcoming stillness, we acknowledge our need of your waiting time. And we ask your forgiveness on all our lack of care – for you, for ourselves, and for others – in the midst of festive preparations.

God, who speaks to us in angel's words and baby's cries, speak to us now as we await your good word for our souls.

And as forgiven people, we will be still and wait, and we will praise you. Amen.

#### **Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11**

#### **Hymn: God's Spirit Is In My Heart (StF 404)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qAh4YRIq6k>

#### **Gospel Reading: John 1:6-8, 19-28**

#### **Reflection:**

John, that man nicknamed 'Baptist', I suspect was first ignored or dismissed as a crank, as rather peculiar. As one rare hymn has it, "A ragged, rugged, honeyed rogue". He was scruffy, living in the wilderness. Perhaps today he might be a character living rough under the railway arches. The thing with poor people, sleeping rough, is that we tend to judge by appearances. John was not a guest for your dinner party, though surely he ought to be? There is the attraction of the unusual, so people came out into the desert to see this guy they had heard about. They had received a mixture of rumour and false news, laced with truth. And what did they find? Well we have a description of John in the gospels, which is unusual in itself, but his words seemed to throw caution to the wind. People were not quite sure what to make of him. He was popular, certainly, and what he was saying was sharp, lucid, uncluttered. Anyone could understand his message.

What people heard rang with the bell of judgement. Where had they heard about someone like this before? Searching scriptures, John seemed like a reincarnation of one of the Hebrew

prophets. All of this, mixed together, raised suspicion. Perhaps he was seeding subversion, making way for some sort of revolution. Of course, he was heard in different ways by different people, and the priests and Levites needed to know his agenda. They worried he might threaten their power, undermine their authority. John was popular: the poor were drawn to him, those who felt they needed forgiveness. Freely, he'd baptise them, help them turn their lives around, enable them to find some peace in troubled times. It was as though he was offering a love that drowned their faults and fear just like the Jordan smothered breath. He offered freedom and he judged in their favour. That undermined the religious power base.

Perhaps we still need prophets like John today. But perhaps we have them. David Attenborough? Greta Thunberg? Speaking to life, politics, religion...if only we have ears to hear...

*To Ponder:*

*Whose voices speak most clearly and prophetically to us today?*

*What actions might we take today to affirm people in our community?*

### **Hymn: On Jordan's Bank The Baptist's Cry (StF 182)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCVGs-NFipU>

### **Advent Intersessions**

We are waiting, Jesus; Come and live with us soon.

Jesus, we are waiting because we know who you are: the Creator of the world, the God who took on human form, the son of Mary, a girl just like any other girl.

We are waiting, Jesus; Come and live with us soon.

Jesus, we are waiting because we have faith in you; we know that we can trust you, we remember that you are good to us, and we thank you for all the good things that you give to us every day.

We are waiting, Jesus; Come and live with us soon.

Jesus, we are waiting here; here in Hailsham, here in East Sussex. Waiting for you to come into our houses, our streets, our shops and office, to fill them with your light and peace.

We are waiting, Jesus; Come and live with us soon.

Jesus, we are waiting for you to come and change things: to bring health to our sick ones, to make our asylum seekers welcome, to comfort those who have lost loved ones;

And to turn us around so that we can be your hands and feet, your ears and eyes, in this world that needs you so much.

We are waiting, Jesus; Come and live with us soon. Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

We pray as Jesus taught us: Our Father .....

### **Hymn: Colours Of Day Dawn Into The Mind (StF 167)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJPsr8a8SA>

### **Blessing**

The blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, remain with us all; this day, this Advent season and always. Amen.

Advent Prayers compiled by Rev Barbara Evans-Routley. ©Alison Adam & John Davies, Candles and Conifers, Wild Goose Worship, 2005

Reflection by Rev Andrew Pratt, taken from 'A Word In Time', Methodist Church website