

The Gathering

1 - Welcome - [KELVIN]

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Hello and welcome to St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow. My name is Kelvin Holdsworth and I'm the provost here.

Last week we heard that the word of the Lord came to John the Baptist. This week we hear John's own words. He spoke to ordinary people long ago with an extraordinary message. But what can we hear him saying that is for us today?

Let us listen to John the Baptist today and listen out for the voice of God speaking to us.

Welcome to this service of worship.

3 - Collect for Purity - [IAIN]

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

5 - Confession

[OLIVER] God is love and we are God's children.
There is no room for fear in love.
We love because God loved us first.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

[Silence]

God our Father, we confess to you and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, and in what we have failed to do. We are truly sorry. Forgive us our sins, and deliver us from the power of evil, for the sake of your Son who died for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[KELVIN] God, who is both power and love, forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by the Holy Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

7 - Kyrie- [MORVEN]

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.
Christ have mercy. Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

8 - Collect - [KELVIN]

Almighty God, you sent your Son into a world where the wheat must be winnowed from the chaff and evil clings even to what is good.

Let the fire of your Spirit purge us of greed and deceit, so that, purified, we may find our peace in you and you may delight in us.

Grant this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near: your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

The Ministry of the Word

11 - GOSPEL: Luke 3:7-18 – []

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

Glory to Christ our Saviour.

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'

And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.'

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious gospel

Praise to Christ our Lord.

12 - Sermon [OLIVER]

I am a convert. That is, I grew up in one faith practice and later in life switched to another. I am an Episcopalian by choice. That

means the things I came to believe and do as an Episcopalian were things I had to learn—to find out. But for me, that wasn't a problem.

As a teen, I was captivated, gripped in the power of a new religious conviction, and I immersed myself in everything there was to immerse myself in in being an Episcopalian. I was like Jasmine on the magic carpet. # A whole new world! # I read every book I could get my hands on. I was an Anglican now, and I needed a whole new vocabulary, a new approach, mindset, set of customs ... and wardrobe. When faced with a decision, I'd ask, 'Do Episcopalians do that?' When given a choice, I'd ask, 'Is there an Episcopal version?' This was serious stuff, and, boy, did I take it seriously.

My experience of throwing myself into a newfound conviction may seem familiar. There's something called the 'zeal of the convert'. Converts sometimes appear more fervent when compared to those born into something. Neophytes like me have made a choice. The draw or appeal of a new way of doing things is powerful enough to change a previously held pattern or identity. Of course, not everyone who changes a religion or other affiliation will have this sense of enthusiasm, but it doesn't seem uncommon.

John the Baptist found himself surrounded by people in the wilderness. They'd made their way out to the desert because they'd heard some remarkable things—things that changed lives. People had conversion experiences, and the curious wanted to find out more. 'Here we are, John, tell us what to do', they said. And they were determined. Even John's hurling insults couldn't drive them away.

One possible scenario could have played out like this. John could have welcomed some new disciples. I imagine there was plenty of room in the desert. 'Grab yourself a camel hair coat. Here are some locusts. (The honey makes them taste a little better.)' The code of conduct would be ascetic—no haircuts, no wine. Living out here will bring you closer to God.

Instead, the Baptist talks about life back home. Share what you have with the people where you are. In your work, act fairly. With the power you have, use it well; be satisfied with your portion. He doesn't tell the tax collector to resign, nor does he say to the soldier become something else. All the new ways of being John described were within the contexts of people's own lives—lives lived not in the desert, but in the villages, towns, and cities they came from. Now, make no mistake about it; John asked people to change. He called for repentance. He was uncompromising, strict. But as different as this new existence was, it wasn't lived in a remote wilderness, sequestered from the world. John's directions were for their old lives—their places of origin, the situations they were in.

In my eagerness to be a shiny new Episcopalian, I had hoped that a new lifestyle would obliterate all my longstanding worries and problems. It is perhaps attractive to think that new ways of thinking will offer a new lease on life, a breakaway from all that has been harmful and dreadful about the old one. (Flying rug, take me away!) And in many ways, a fresh perspective made significant changes for me. But soon enough, I came (as many do) to realise that all the things I'd hoped this new faith would cure were still out there. After the high of conversion faded, the world and I still had issues.

What strikes me about today's Gospel is that John the Baptist didn't ask people to adopt a new wardrobe, find a new address, get new friends, or change jobs. Instead, he told them to work with what they had, where they were. That isn't the kind of conversion everyone hopes for. But religion—true religion—is for the lives we have, the earth in which we live. Although we may sometimes get glimpses of another space and time, the design of faith practices is not to deliver us into 'a whole new world'. Rather, they are to give us, as the song says, 'a new fantastic point of view'. This is what the Baptist offered then, and I wish it were something we heard more of now. Faith isn't an idealised way of living; it isn't an escape. It's a way of dealing with the flawed and frail life we have now.

14 - Intercessions [MIMI]

Let us pray.

I ask your prayers for peace in the life of the world ...

Pray for God's peace.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all who suffer injury, sickness and loss ...

Pray for all who are afflicted.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all who wield authority and influence ..

Pray for all who exercise power.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all whom we have wronged ...

Pray for all who have cause to hate us.

Silence

I ask your prayers for our bishop Kevin

For the Anglican church of Canada. The Clergy and congregations of St James the Less, Bishopbriggs and St Cyprian's, Lenzie

In our cathedral, we pray for all those who are exploring and rethinking their faith

And for all whom Christ has appointed to his service.

Pray for God's people.

Silence

I ask your prayers for those whom are planning festive events in our city

Silence

Give thanks to God for all in whom Christ has been honoured,
and for those who have died this week remembering Gladys
Thorpe whose year's mind falls today. May they rest in peace and
rise in Glory.

Silence

Communion

17 - Offertory - [KELVIN]

All kinds of people gathered around John the Baptist to hear his words in the wilderness. And all kinds of people gather in this church and gather around our online presence to hear the Word of the Lord today. If you would like to be part of enabling this ministry, please make an offering today.

Just go to thecathedral.org.uk and click on the words "donate to St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow"

Let us present our offerings to the Lord.

**Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory,
the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in
heaven and on earth is yours.**

All things come from you, and of your own we give you.

18 - Eucharistic Prayer

[KELVIN] The Lord be with you.

[OLIVER] **And also with you.**

[KELVIN] Lift up your hearts.

[OLIVER] **We lift them to the Lord.**

[KELVIN] Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

[OLIVER] **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Worship and praise belong to you, God our maker.
Out of nothing, you called all worlds to be,
and still you draw the universe to its fulfilment.

Dawn and evening celebrate your glory
till time shall be no more.

In Christ your Son the life of heaven and earth were joined,
sealing the promise of a new creation, given, yet still to come.

Taught by your Spirit,
we who bear your threefold likeness look for the City of Peace
in whose light we are transfigured
and the earth transformed.

As children of your redeeming purpose
who await the coming of your Son,
we offer you our praise, with angels and archangels
and the whole company of heaven
singing the hymn of your unending glory:

SANCTUS & BENEDICTUS - [MORVEN]

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Glory and thanksgiving be to you, most loving Father.
In Jesus you showed us yourself.
Our hope is built on him, the first, the last, the living one.

Obedient, even to accepting death, He opened the gate of glory
and calls us now to share the life of heaven.

Before he was given up to suffering and death, alight with the
vision of a feast that heralded a kingdom yet to come, at supper
with his disciples he took bread and offered you thanks.

He broke the bread,
and gave it to them, saying:
"Take, eat.
This is my Body: it is broken for you."
After supper, he took the cup,
he offered you thanks,
and gave it to them saying:
"Drink this, all of you.
This is my Blood of the new covenant;
it is poured out for you, and for all,
that sins may be forgiven.
Do this in remembrance of me."

**We now obey your Son's command.
We recall his blessed passion and death,
his glorious resurrection and ascension;
and we look for the coming of his Kingdom.
Made one with him, we offer you these gifts
and with them ourselves,
a single, holy, living sacrifice.**

Hear us, most merciful Father,
and send your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon this bread and this wine,
that, overshadowed by the Spirit's life-giving power,
they may be the Body and Blood of your Son,
and we may be kindled with the fire of your love
and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

**Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body
to live and work to your praise and glory;
may we grow together in unity and love
until at last, in your new creation,
we enter into our heritage
in the company of the Virgin Mary,
the apostles, and prophets,
and of all God's children living and departed.**

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be to you,
Lord of all ages,
world without end.

Amen.

19 - Breaking of the Bread - [KELVIN]

The living bread is broken for the life of the world.
Lord, unite us in this sign.

20 - Lord's Prayer - [OLIVER]

As our Saviour has taught us,
so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Do not bring us
to the time of trial
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

21 - Communion - [KELVIN]

God is with us wherever we are.

As we gaze in adoration we feed on God in our hearts and minds that we may in turn feed the world.

O God, even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.
Amen.

24 - Post Communion Prayer - [SHONA]

Merciful God, may this eucharist free us from our sins, fill us with unending joy, and prepare us for the birthday of our Saviour. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

25 - Blessing - [KELVIN]

Thank you for sharing in the worship today.

We heard today that those who gathered around John the Baptist were filled with expectation. And that's a good Advent theme to end on. May you be filled with expectation this week.

Expect God to turn up in your life.

And may Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you and illuminate the path before you; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen

Amen.

Voluntary - [STEVEN]

Fughette on Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland - Andreas Vetter