

The Gathering

1 - Welcome - [MAGGIE]

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

Hello and welcome to our service for the second Sunday of Advent. My name is Maggie McTernan and I'm one of the priests here at St Mary's Cathedral.

As we gather, let's lift our eyes from all that is around us, and look where John the Baptist is directing us, to the one who will bring repentance and the forgiveness of all our sins.

3 - Collect for Purity - [MACKENZIE]

**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

[KELVIN] 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.

[MAGGIE] 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 - [MAGGIE]

God of our salvation, you straighten the winding ways of our hearts and smooth the paths made rough by sin. Make our conduct blameless, keep our hearts watchful in holiness, and bring to perfection the good you have begun in us. We ask 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 3:1-6 – [AUDREY]

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

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, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to

John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 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.

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;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious gospel

Praise to Christ our Lord.

12 - Sermon [KELVIN]

Let me tell you a secret.

There’s someone that I don’t much like.

He’s not someone I have to think about much. Occasionally I see his picture someplace or another and I just pass it by. I take no notice.

But then at this time of year, it seems as though I’m bumping into him all the time.

And when I do, I think to myself, “Well, I’m going to try to keep this to myself because everyone else seems to like you and I’m sure Jesus loves you but I’m afraid I don’t.”

Jesus loves everyone, I know. And I know I’m supposed to try to love everyone just like he does. But, well, I’m not the son of God and sometimes love just eludes me.

And this guy that I bump into at this time of the year – well there’s just nothing about him that appeals.

He's relentlessly right about things.

He wears rough clothes and he has a sharp tongue. And even when he's not mouthing off at me, he's mouthing off at someone else. And he's just a little bit embarrassing to be seen with in public.

He has this sense of righteousness about him that ought to make him more attractive but the truth is, it doesn't.

He struggles to listen to people who are not as committed as he is.

He never knows when to stop making his point.

He's rude. Uncouth.

And I just don't like him.

It may seem irrational but I don't like him.

No, it is worse that. I can't stand him.

And the real trouble is, I've had enough therapy to know the obvious question to ask about this dislike.

I can imagine all too well a good counsellor looking at me and asking as though thinking of the idea for the very first time, "And is there anything, Kelvin about that this guy whom you don't like, anything about this John the Baptist chap that reminds you of yourself in any way."

And that question just makes me want to scowl and mutter about nests of vipers and call on my imaginary therapist to repent.

I guess I have to reluctantly admit that I've got reasons for not liking John the Baptist much.

But here he is – showing up right on schedule as usual at this time of year.

And there's no getting to the Christmas crib and angels and camels and shepherds and Magi and the babe in the manger and

all that without passing this way, and hearing what the Baptist has to say.

John the Baptist doesn't tend to shut up – a fact that got him into very deep trouble in the end.

But like him or not, there's no ignoring him.

I'll say some more about what he's saying to us this week in a minute. But let me commend my reflections on John the Baptist as a suitably dark spiritual exercise for Advent.

You can go on all kinds of pious prayerful spiritual experiences and be asked with whom you identify in a bible story in particular or with whom you identify in the bible in general. And there's nothing wrong with any of that.

But if that's old hat to you, try thinking about the biblical character you can't stand.

Who do you really not like?

And try to work out why.

Maybe there's insights to be had there too.

So what of what John the Baptist has to say today?

The gospel writer instinctively associates these prophetic words with John.

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.

It isn't as though the gospel writers were listening to Handel's Messiah to themselves whilst writing either. They simply recognise that John was proclaiming loudly what previous prophets had suggested should happen when the actual Messiah was near.

This archetypical behaviour still goes on now too. When someone important is expected one of the first things that happens is that people fix the roads.

We had it here during COP26. When all the Important People. And Very Important People. And Very, Very Important People were flying (yes, flying, ironically) in and out of the climate change conference the roads needed to be fixed or even closed to lesser mortals and cleared completely.

Sorting out the royal processional way is an instinctive response to royalty.

(And it seems to be the same even when there are no monarchs involved).

And John the Baptist invites us to do just that with our lives today.

Fix the roads. Clear the pathways. Put right the potholes and repair the carriageway.

There's a king coming!

Get ready he says.

There's someone who is very, very important and they are just about to arrive.

- Turn things round.
- Repent of your sin.
- Sort your stuff out.

God is on the way.

Luke is really precise about when the word of the Lord came to John the Baptist. It was in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius when Pontius Pilate was governor and Philip was ruling Iturea and Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests.

Luke wants to be very precise. At exactly that time, the word of the Lord came to John.

And he not only wanted to sort out everything for himself but sort out the inequalities and iniquities of the world around him.

When will the same word of the Lord come to you?

For, look out! There's a king coming.

The God of Love is at hand.

Time to get ready.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

14 - Intercessions [DEBBIE]

I ask your prayers for peace in the life of the world. For the safety of all refugees, and for all places where there is fear, persecution and conflict.

Pray for God's peace.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all who suffer injury, sickness and loss. For those facing loneliness.

Pray for all who are afflicted.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all who wield authority and influence. For those who strive for justice and integrity.

Pray for all who exercise power.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all whom we have wronged.

Pray for all who hate us.

Silence

I ask your prayers for our Bishop, Kevin, and for the Anglican Church of Burundi. For the churches of Holy Trinity, Kilmarnock and St. Ninian's, Troon. Here at the cathedral, for the Vestry compliance group. And for all whom Christ has appointed to his service.

Pray for God's people.

Silence

I ask your prayers for those affected by mental health conditions here in our community. For their carers and service providers.

Pray for all who need and who give support.

Silence

Give thanks to God for all in whom Christ has been honoured, for George Higgieson; for Beulah Ivy Mann and for Richard Williams, whose year's mind is today.

And for those who have died recently.

May they rest in peace.

And rise in glory.

Communion

17 - Offertory - [MAGGIE]

If you wish to make a financial contribution to the life of the cathedral, you can find ways to do this on the website – thecathedral.org.uk – and click on donate to St Mary's.

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

[MAGGIE] The Lord be with you.

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

[MAGGIE] Lift up your hearts.

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

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

[KELVIN] **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 - [MAGGIE]

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

20 - Lord's Prayer - [KELVIN]

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 - [MAGGIE]

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 - [KATE]

Faithful God, we thank you for feeding us with this heavenly banquet. Help us always to hear the prophet's call to turn our hearts to you; in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Amen.

25 - Blessing - [MAGGIE]

This is the season of preparation for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that each day this week you will feel the presence of God drawing close to you.

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Voluntary - [STEVEN]

Chorale Prelude on *Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland* (BuxWV 211)