



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 14 DECEMBER 2025 – Advent 3

COLLECT

O Lord Jesus Christ,
who at your first coming sent your messenger
to prepare your way before you:
grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries
may likewise so prepare and make ready your way
by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,
that at your second coming to judge the world
we may be found an acceptable people in your sight;
for you are alive and reign with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 146. 4-10

4 Happy are those who have the God of Jacob for their help, ♦
whose hope is in the Lord their God;
5 Who made heaven and earth,
the sea and all that is in them; ♦
who keeps his promise for ever;
6 Who gives justice to those that suffer wrong ♦
and bread to those who hunger.
7 The Lord looses those that are bound; ♦
the Lord opens the eyes of the blind;
8 The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; ♦
the Lord loves the righteous;
9 The Lord watches over the stranger in the land;
he upholds the orphan and widow; ♦
but the way of the wicked he turns upside down.
10 The Lord shall reign for ever, ♦
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations.
Alleluia.

A reading from the Epistle of James, chapter 5, verses 7-10.

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from Matthew, chapter 11, verses 2-11

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel. Everywhere except Fitz introduces it with an Acclamation (the blue bit), and then we all use the introduction and ending (the green bit):

Alleluia. **Alleluia.**

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, chapter 11, verses 2-11.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

A Reflection from Hannah

Faith and doubt. Are they opposites? Absolutely not- our doubts sharpen our faith, help us to enrich it and deepen it. The questions and the opportunities that doubts bring enable us to better understand what it is we do believe, and how that therefore shapes our pilgrimage.

Last week we focused on the confidence of John the Baptist- calling out from the edges, pointing to Christ and proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom. In this week's reading John is in prison, undergoing an internal crisis- has he got it wrong? Is Jesus just another 'good man', and not actually the chosen one? In reading this account, we can feel encouraged- if John the Baptist can have a shaky moment, and share it with Jesus, then any of us can! And Christ in turn, by his response, reminds us that it is the fruits of the Spirit at work that provide evidence that the resurrection life is real. Jesus responds with words that echo the Nazareth Manifesto from the book of Isaiah- 'the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.'

In other words, talk is cheap. It's all very well to declare or to name or to announce that something is the case- but we then need to look for the evidence of it. The evidence of the unfolding work of God in the world is Jubilee. It is healing, it is freedom, it is life in abundance. That life is at work all around us, and these past weeks it has been a joy to encounter it in the many Christmas events we've been part of- whether it's been Carol Services, school nativities, our Eucharist at Isle Court, or in the quietness of taking Communion to those in their homes; amidst difficulties and struggles there are glimpses of the light of the Christ child shining through- bringing all the good things of God into the small moments of our daily lives. And that is something to be truly thankful for.