

Pew Reflections

The Third Sunday of Advent – Sunday 11 December 2022

- Isaiah 35.1-10; *Song of Mary* (APBA, pp 31, 435);
James 5.7-10; Matthew 11.2-11

Jesus says of John the Baptist that he is the one who has been sent to prepare the way for Jesus himself. The Greek Church calls John the Baptist the Προδρομος – *Prodrimos* – *the Forerunner*. This week, pray that like John the Baptist you can prepare the way for Jesus himself in whatever circumstance you find yourself.

- Pray this week for the chance to prepare the way for Jesus to enter the world.
- Give thanks for the Church of the Province of Central Africa, remembering especially the work of the Zambia Anglican Council.

Text: Robert McLean
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Reflection

I get why Mary sings. Carrying a child is where great wonder and gentle patience really are the best companions. The baby develops and grows in a pattern that has been repeated across millennia. In the revealing journeying together, child and mother communicate in unspoken shared moments. Through sensation and movement, each development brings an evolving closeness, a relationship that is unlike any other. The intimate and personal connection between them is one that can only be looked upon by another, and wondered at. Mary is filled with both the intimate delight of life awakening within her, an organic connection from the genesis of time, threading through creation to this point, and beyond. Through this, she is drawn to the infinite reality where God's unexpected promises break into the immediacy of now, promises fulfilled and the unfolding of revealing hope. Her Canticle enables her to take a moment, in her reality, to allow the wonder to unfold, and to prepare with gentle patience, the growing 'present' of 'God with us' - a gift indeed, and something to sing about.

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HOLY INNOCENTS ANGLICAN CHURCH BELAIR

Readings - Sunday 11 December - Third Sunday in Advent

Sentence

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.' *Isaiah 35.3-4*

Collect

Sustain us, O God, with the power of your love on our journey to meet the One who is coming: strengthen our weak hands, make firm our feeble knees, and open blind eyes to the dawning of your kingdom, so that our hearts may rejoice as we behold the majesty of our God. We ask this through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 35.1-10

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus
² it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.
³ Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
'Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.'

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
⁸ A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.
⁹ No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
¹⁰ And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

For the word of the Lord, Thanks be to God.

Psalm - The Song of Mary

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord:
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

Who has looked with favour on his lowly servant:
from this day all generations will call me blessed;

The Almighty has done great things for me:
and holy is his name.

God has mercy on those who fear him:
from generation to generation.

The Lord has shown strength with his arm:
and scattered the proud in their conceit,

Casting down the mighty from their thrones:
and lifting up the lowly.

God has filled the hungry with good things:
and sent the rich away empty.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel:
to remember the promise of mercy,

The promise made to our forebears:
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
as in the beginning, so now, and for ever. Amen.

2nd Reading: James 5.7-10

⁷ 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. ⁸ You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

For the word of the Lord, Thanks be to God.

Gospel reading: Matthew 11.2-11

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' ⁴ Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ 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. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.' ⁷ 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? ⁸ What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ 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.

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