



‘Worship at home’ Sunday December 15th 2024



This is the **third Sunday in Advent**,
a joyful time of anticipation and preparation for the coming
celebration of Christmas, while yet we await the fulfillment of
God’s kingdom in our changing and uncertain world.

Light a candle to remind you that Christ has come,
Christ is with us, and we believe Christ will come again.

Opening

How do we know joy in changing times?

A day is coming when people will sing,

"Give thanks to the Lord! Call for him to help you!

Sing to the Lord because of the great things he has done.

Let the whole world hear the news." (from Isaiah 12:4,5)

How do we know joy in this time of Advent?

**We can rejoice in the coming of Christ Jesus,
who renews and restores us,
bringing joy to the world,
and joy to our lives.**

Let us worship the One who leads us on:
in the promise of the Spirit of joy.



The Israelites had long anticipated the coming of a Messiah as a King who would save them from political oppression and bring them into freedom, fulfilling the ancient sacred covenant made between God and God’s people. Prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke words of hope reminding the people of this covenant, anticipating the fulfillment of God’s kingdom. John was the son of the priest Zechariah, and Elizabeth, a cousin to Jesus’ mother Mary. John also proclaimed the coming of this Messiah, calling for people to repent and turn to God. We are invited to recognise that which keeps us from God, seeking forgiveness and renewal as we are transformed in God’s grace. This truly will bring us joy.

Luke 3:7-18

Crowds of people came out to John to be baptised by him. "You snakes!" he said to them. "Who told you that you could escape from the punishment God is about to send? Do those things that will show that you have turned from your sins. And don't start saying among yourselves that Abraham is your ancestor. I tell you that God can take these rocks and make descendants for Abraham! The axe is ready to cut down the trees at the roots; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire." The people asked him, "What are we to do, then?" He answered, "Whoever has two shirts must give one to the man who has none, and whoever has food must share it." Some tax collectors came to be baptised, and they asked him, "Teacher, what are we to do?" "Don't collect more than

is legal," he told them. Some soldiers also asked him, "What about us? What are we to do?" He said to them, "Don't take money from anyone by force or accuse anyone falsely. Be content with your pay." People's hopes began to rise, and they began to wonder whether John perhaps might be the Messiah. So John said to all of them, "I baptise you with water, but someone is coming who is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to untie his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He has his winnowing shovel with him, to thresh out all the grain and gather the wheat into his barn; but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out." In many different ways John preached the Good News to the people and urged them to change their ways.

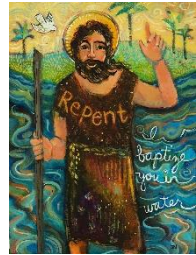
Good News Bible

John's words are challenging, as we are called to recognise that which keeps us from God and to seek forgiveness. Many of us are fortunate enough to live with plenty: our wardrobes are full and our cupboards overflow. However, we are aware that others, in our community and around the world, are in need of food, clothes and shelter.

John offers simple advice:

- share what you have plenty of
- don't take what is not yours
- be content with what you have

**When have you had more than you need,
and been aware that others go without?**



What opportunities do you have to give to others?

Repentance calls for a commitment to change our attitudes and our behaviours, that we might be as trees that bear good fruit. John's listeners asked him, "What are we to do?"

**What is one thing you can do differently this week
to share with, help or support another?**

For example, you might donate some food to an emergency relief centre/UnitingCare, clean out your wardrobe and take the items to your local op-shop, pay a coffee forward, buy a Christmas gift for someone in need...

Part of the good news is that none of us is expected to change the whole world on our own. We are called to change ourselves. When we do what we should do, share the gifts we have, treat others right, and moderate our use of power for the common good, we have done what we can. Those simple actions can transform our communities and ultimately save a world.

Cheryl Lindsay

<https://www.ucc.org/sermon-seeds/sermon-seeds-proclaiming-the-good-news>

Paul's letter to the community at Philippi also reflects on how we can live in ways that bring transformation to our lives, our communities and our world.

Philippians 4:4-7

*Rejoice in the Lord always.
I will say it again: Rejoice! Let
your gentleness be evident to
all. The Lord is near. Do not
be anxious about anything,
but in every situation, by
prayer and petition, with*

*thanksgiving, present your
requests to God. And the
peace of God, which
transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and
your minds in Christ Jesus.*

New International Version 3

REJOICE IN THE Lord ALWAYS

PHILIPPIANS 4:4

It is thought Paul wrote these words from prison, during a time of change and uncertainty as Jesus' followers determined how they were to live in the light of Jesus' death and resurrection, alongside the call to spread the good news of Christ's love and grace to all nations. These words speak to us today, as we reflect on how we live in times of change and uncertainty.

Rejoice

Do not be anxious

Pray

The third Sunday in Advent is sometimes called Gaudete Sunday, taken from the Latin translation of Philippians 4:4: *Gaudete in Domino semper* (Rejoice in the Lord always).

What brings you joy?

How do you express joy?

This Christmas, how might you bring joy to others?

Prayer

Gracious God, you are so good to us.
We give you thanks for our blessings
and would ask that the joy we feel in our hearts
not only be expressed by our lips
but with our hands also.

May our lives embody the joy we find in you
by sharing it with those who need it most.

This we pray in your holy name. Amen.

Written by Rev. Stephen M. Fearing - www.stephenmfearing.com



Closing

Rejoice in the Lord always,
show gentleness to all,
do not be anxious,
make your needs known to God by prayer,
with thanksgiving;
and the peace of God
guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Amen.

