



‘Worship at home’ Sunday December 8th 2024



This is the **second Sunday in Advent**, as we prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ child at Christmas, and await the fulfillment of God’s kingdom in our changing and uncertain world. **Lighting a candle** reminds us of the presence of Christ in our world, and in our lives.

Christ has come
Christ is with us
Christ will come again

Opening

How do we know peace in changing times?

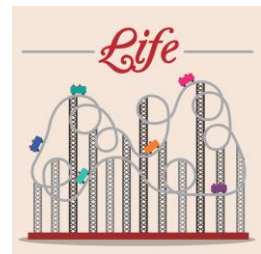
***The valleys will be filled, and the mountains levelled
as God gives peace in the ups and downs of our lives.***

How do we know peace in this time of Advent?

***We know peace through the Prince of Peace
who renews and restores us,
bringing peace to the world,
and peace to our lives.***

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

During some periods in our lives, we can feel like we are on a rollercoaster, swinging from highs to lows. We may face uncertainty in our lives, our health, our relationships, our world. This can feel difficult and unsettling.



Think back over the past year or so:

... when were your “mountain” times of joy?

... when were your “valleys” of struggle?

**On reflection, where have you experienced God’s peace
with you in the ups and downs of your life?**

The priest Zechariah knew uncertainty, living in the unrest of Judah under Roman rule. He was aging and childless, when an angel told him that his wife Elizabeth was going to have a baby. After hearing this news, Zechariah was struck dumb, only finding his voice after naming his son, John, by writing on a stone tablet. He then proclaims a canticle of praise to God, anticipating the coming of One who would be light for those in darkness, and bring peace and salvation for all.

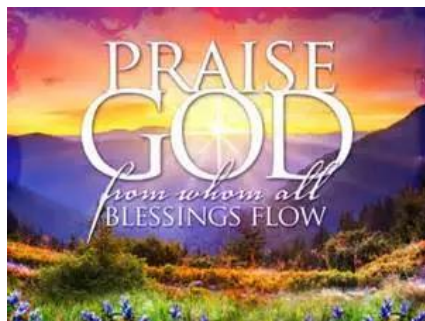
Luke 1:68-79

"Let us praise the Lord, the God of Israel! He has come to the help of his people and has set them free. He has provided for us a mighty Saviour, a descendant of his servant David. He promised through his holy prophets long ago that he would save us from our enemies, from the power of all those who hate us. He said he would show mercy to our ancestors and remember his sacred covenant. With a solemn oath to our ancestor Abraham he promised to rescue us from our enemies and allow us to

serve him without fear, so that we might be holy and righteous before him all the days of our life. "You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God. You will go ahead of the Lord to prepare his road for him, to tell his people that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven. Our God is merciful and tender. He will cause the bright dawn of salvation to rise on us and to shine from heaven on all those who live in the dark shadow of death, to guide our steps into the path of peace." Good News Bible

**Who or what do you
give praise to God for
at this time?**

**You are invited to write or
speak out loud your own
canticle of praise,
naming the blessings of God
for which you are thankful.**



John spoke into a world that was as complex and uncertain as ours, proclaiming the coming of Jesus and inviting people to repent and turn to God. The word repentance means “a turning around”. We are invited to recognise that which keeps us from God, seeking forgiveness and renewal as we are transformed in God’s grace.



Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch 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 country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for

the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all people will see God’s salvation.’ ”

New International Version



John quotes a passage from Isaiah, written during another period of uncertainty and change for the Israelites, during their time of exile in Babylon. Their journey back to Jerusalem would be a challenging one, over steep mountains and rough roads. However, they expressed their faith and trust in God, whose presence was with them as they returned to a place of safety and peace.

Our lives are sometimes challenging, with steep mountains to face and rough roads to travel. They can seem tumultuous and unsettling, and we too long for safety and peace. We are assured of God's presence with us on the journey, giving us strength for those mountains and endurance for the struggles. As we experience the ups and downs of our lives, may we know a deep, abiding sense of God's presence and peace with us, every step of the way.

Prayer

In the lonely places, the wilderness
Where we stand forlorn, windswept and alone
Your voice calls out: **Prepare a way for the Lord**



In the dark places, the shadows
Where we hide our fears, embrace our tears
Your voice calls out: **Prepare a way for the Lord**

For the desert places in which we walk
The streets we roam, the paths we cross, guide our feet
Take us to places where you would go
Give us words that you would use
That in this Advent season of promise and preparation
We might point the way with John the Baptist
to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

~ John Birch http://www.faithandworship.com/Advent/Advent_John_the_Baptist.htm

We choose to live into God's presence and peace, making it a reality in our lives. We can then bring a sense of God's presence and peace to those around us.

**Text, phone, write to or email a friend
and wish them God's peace today.**



**Challenge yourself to live each day grounded
in God's presence and peace.**

Closing

We hear a voice from the wilderness calling, "Prepare the way for the Lord and make the paths straight for him." May our lives be signs of God's love, symbols of hope, carriers of grace and bearers of peace. Amen.