

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2019

## Advent 2

Purple



### Collect

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for ever. **Amen**

**Romans 15:4-13** English Standard Version (ESV)

### The Example of Christ

<sup>4</sup>For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup>May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

### Christ the Hope of Jews and Gentiles

<sup>8</sup>For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, <sup>9</sup>and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." <sup>10</sup>And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." <sup>11</sup>And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." <sup>12</sup>And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope." <sup>13</sup>May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

**COMMENT:** Paul was one of the early interpreters of the Old Testament in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This passage illustrates how he used the Hebrew Scriptures familiar to him to encourage Roman Christians whom he had never met, presumably both Jews and Gentiles, to live harmoniously so as to give a common witness in their rather uncertain and increasingly dangerous

surroundings. Like Isaiah and many other prophets and psalmists, Paul had a very hopeful vision of a world based on unity, peace and justice, especially between Jew and Gentile. He fervently believed that this could be achieved through faith in Jesus Christ. He had dedicated the whole of his ministry to show that Gentiles too were included in God's purpose and plan of salvation. This was the whole of the argument he had set forth in this letter. Here he fortified that argument with a series of scripture quotations strung together to prove his point. These quotations come from such widely separated writings as Psalm 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:32; Psalm 117:1 and Isaiah 11:10.

### **Matthew 3:1-12** English Standard Version (ESV)

#### **John the Baptist Prepares the Way**

**3** <sup>3</sup> In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup>“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” <sup>3</sup> For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare<sup>a</sup> the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’” <sup>4</sup> Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup> Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, <sup>6</sup> and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>7</sup> But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup> And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>10</sup> Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>11</sup> “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

**Footnotes:** a. or *crying: Prepare in the wilderness*

**COMMENT:** John the Baptist was more than an Old Testament prophet. According to Luke 1:5 he belonged to a priestly family. Compelling as such proposals by some scholars may be, there is no conclusive proof that he had been at one time associated with the Qumran community of Essenes. His practice of baptism as moral purification, does lend itself to such a view. Baptism as John practiced it was more than the ritual cleansing of the Qumran sectarians. His baptising in the River Jordan recalled the ancient tradition of Israel becoming a new people by passing through its waters. John's call for radical repentance and immersion did not serve to inaugurate

a new religious tradition. He only sought to renew the ancient relationship with God implicit in the ancient covenant. His task was to call the Jews to prepare for the coming of God's Anointed One whose spiritual baptism would be different yet again. There were many parallels with Isaiah in John's ministry as we have it described by Mark and Matthew. We must recall that the gospels were written for the second or third generation of the Christian community. To the early church John represented the transition from the old covenant to the new. He was the herald who called the attention of the crowd to an imminent event – the coming of Israel's true Messiah. Despite the severity of John's message (verses. 7-12) Matthew cast Jesus in the role of the true Messiah. Are we, like those to whom he called to prepare for the Messiah's advent, too distracted by the terrors, trends and trinkets of our own time to hear what he had to say or to listen for the new and living Word from the One to whom he pointed?

**Psalm 72** *Deus, iudicium* Grail Psalter

**℟ In his days justice shall flourish, and peace till the moon fails.**

<sup>1</sup> O God, give your judgment to the king,  
to a king's son your justice,

<sup>2</sup> that he may judge your people in justice  
and your poor in right judgment. ℟

<sup>3</sup> May the mountains bring forth peace for the people  
and the hills, justice.

<sup>4</sup> May he defend the poor of the people  
and save the children of the needy  
(and crush the oppressor). ℟

<sup>5</sup> He shall endure like the sun and the moon  
from age to age.

<sup>6</sup> He shall descend like rain on the meadow,  
like raindrops on the earth. ℟

<sup>7</sup> In his days justice shall flourish  
and peace till the moon fails.

<sup>8</sup> He shall rule from sea to sea,  
from the Great River to earth's bounds. ℟

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** This is one of several prayers in the Psalter for the monarch, God's anointed representative. (Cf. Psalms. 2; 18; 28; 21; 45; 89; 101; 132.) It may have been recited during public worship at the New Year festival, the ruler's birthday or some other royal celebration. Despite much hyperbole (exaggeration) about longevity and the extent of his kingdom (verses.5, 8-11, 16), it also contains a challenge to the monarch to be accountable for his divinely appointed role. He is to rule with justice and bring his people prosperity and freedom (verses. 2-4; 12-16). The psalmist wrote in hyperbolic phrases. This raises the question whether the idealistic attitude so expressed proved the point made in 1 Samuel 8 regarding the prophet's reticence about the whole concept of kingship, modelled after the practice of other nations, to replace the governance of the LORD with a human political figurehead. In later times, however, after the monarchy had been removed by the Babylonian exile, the concept of a human monarch was again transformed into the promise of a divinely anointed messiah. The Christian community adapted this concept to their earliest Christology. Advent celebrates the theme of Jesus as the fulfilment of the messianic promises of Israel. Indeed, is this not the theme that runs through the whole biblical story and the Christian liturgy from Advent to the Reign of Christ the King?

### **Short Preface**

And now we give you thanks because you sent him to redeem us from sin and death and to make us inheritors of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may with joy behold his appearing, and in confidence may stand before him.

### **Post Communion**

Father in heaven, who sent your Son to redeem the world and will send him again to be our judge: give us grace so to imitate him in the humility and purity of his first coming that, when he comes again, we may be ready to greet him with joyful love and firm faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

### **Blessing**

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**