

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2018

## Second Sunday of Advent

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**

### Philippians 1:3-11 English Standard Version (ESV)

#### Thanksgiving and Prayer

1<sup>3</sup> I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace,<sup>[a]</sup> both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

**Footnotes:** a. Or *you all have fellowship with me in grace*

**COMMENT:** Tried and imprisoned for his work as an apostle, Paul thanked God for the support of the Philippians. It would appear that they had been in touch with him during his trial and imprisonment (vs.7). He wrote of them “sharing” the gospel and God’s grace reflecting his close association with them and their response to his ministry during at least three visits. (See Acts 16:12; 2 Cor. 2:3; Acts 20:6). Partnership in the gospel involves not only a gift, but a task. Paul then prayed that this will

bring forth an overflowing of love and holy living as they waited for the anticipated return of Christ. This, Paul believed, would produce “knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best.” (verse 9) In other words, love, the supreme gift of the Spirit, would lead to spiritual growth and moral discernment, all to the glory and praise of God. This is an appropriate mandate for any congregation in our own time as it was for the Philippians in the 1st century AD.

### **Luke 3:1-6** English Standard Version (ESV)

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

3<sup>1</sup> In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,<sup>2</sup> during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.<sup>3</sup> And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>4</sup> As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord,<sup>[a]</sup> make his paths straight.’<sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways,<sup>6</sup> and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

**Footnotes:** a. Or *crying, Prepare in the wilderness the way of the Lord*

**COMMENT:** The introductory stories of the births of both John the Baptist and Jesus completed, Luke skips over nearly three decades to place John the Baptist’s ministry, and hence Jesus, in a specific historical context. The 15th year of the reign of Tiberius corresponds to AD 28-29. The Roman imperial government during this period included Pontius Pilate as governor of Judea and the named tetrarchs, Herod Antipas, Philip, Lysanias, of other nearby Roman provinces. The term tetrarch usually referred to a ruler whom Rome appointed over a limited territory who might or might not be a petty monarch. They had little power or purpose other than to maintain a watch for any threats against Roman sovereignty. By also naming the high-priesthoods of Annas and Caiaphas, Luke gave a religious context to this historical note. The gospel tradition he was about to relate was no minor event. It had both political and religious significance. By quoting from Isaiah 40, Luke recognized John as someone even more important than another of Israel’s great prophets. He defined

John's role in the life and ministry of Jesus as that of the one of whom that earlier prophet spoke: "Prepare the way of the Lord." More significantly, he placed Jesus expressly within the sacred tradition of Israel.

**The Canticle of Zechariah** *Benedictus* **Luke 1:68-79**

**℟ Go ahead of the Lord to prepare his way for him. Alleluia.**

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel!  
He has visited his people and redeemed them. ℟

He has raised up for us a mighty saviour  
in the house of David his servant,  
as he promised by the lips of holy men,  
those who were his prophets from of old. ℟

A saviour who would free us from our foes,  
from the hands of all who hate us.  
So his love for our fathers is fulfilled  
and his holy covenant remembered. ℟

He swore to Abraham our father to grant us,  
that free from fear; and saved from the hands of our foes,  
we might serve him in holiness and justice  
all the days of our life in his presence. ℟

As for you, little child,  
you shall be called a prophet of God, the Most High.  
You shall go ahead of the Lord  
to prepare his ways before him, ℟

To make known to his people their salvation  
through forgiveness of all their sins,  
the loving-kindness of the heart of our God  
who visits us like the dawn from on high. ℟

He will give light to those in darkness,  
those who dwell in the shadow of death,  
and guide us into the way of peace. ℟

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :  
and to the Holy Ghost;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** This canticle is known by the Latin translation in Jerome's Vulgate of its first word, Benedictus. The Song of Zechariah was an early Christian hymn. It wove together a series of phrases from several Psalms: verse 68 = Psalm 41:13, 111:9; verse 69 = Psalm 132:17; verse 71 = Psalm 106:10; verses 71-72 = Psalm 105:8-9. Specific Christian content comes only at the end in verses 76-79 where Zechariah celebrates the birth of his son, John the Baptist. It will not have been a case of cribbing, but the phrases of the psalm would be echoing in the author's mind as he give praise. The canticle is primarily a celebration of the fulfilment of Jewish messianic hopes. John is to be the Messiah's forerunner. This prediction combines Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. Though from the hand of Luke, it reflects the teaching of the Apostolic Church in linking the Incarnation with the divinely ordered religious history of Israel. Searching the Jewish scriptures for references applicable to the gospel story was a practice evident throughout the whole New Testament. Numerous other examples can be found in Paul's letters, the Pastoral and General Epistles, and Revelation.

### **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.**