



SUNDAY TABLE SERVICE

17th December 2023 Third Sunday in Advent

*Let us watch Songs of Praise together
on the ABC and then set the table
for our shared meal.*

- **Setting our table for our Sunday lunch service.**

Sometimes we eat, in front of the TV either together or alone; we eat on the run; we eat out in restaurants or even in our car; but today we sit at a table that we have set for our Sunday lunch meal. It is our everyday altar of life-giving food. Give some thought to the presentation of our meal as a meditation on the importance of the time we are setting aside for worship... As we celebrate on this, the third Sunday in Advent, let us define the occasion by adding something special to our table that reminds us of God's peace, which is there for all.



If you are celebrating this meal alone please be aware that God Is With You.

Have you ever been questioned over what you have said, though you are quoting facts and facts that seem obvious. Sometimes we read the bible but miss the point, God does things God's way. Here the Pharisees and Levites struggled to believe John, even when they knew the words of the prophets in detail. Mary however, had no struggle understanding that Her child would one day be the fulfilment of God's promise to Israel. And John puts it that he testifies to the light, that the Messiah is amongst them. A light among them and they still could not see. Belief is not blind but trusting that God is with us and will fulfil his promises and fulfilling them His way.

G.L.O.W.
God Lights Our Way



Sent from my Galaxy **opening prayer — consciously drawing together in our mind our Parish community around our table.** *Be still and silent. Visualise in your mind, those whom you invited to share with you. Pray:*



In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Here, and throughout the world, We adore you O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world. Amen

Bless this food, both physical and spiritual. Bless all who gather at your table, both seen and unseen, In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

- **Let us read and reflect on our cycle of readings**

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 61 v 1-4,8-11

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion — to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.



For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause
Hear the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 126

1 When the Lord turned again the fortunes of Zion:
then were we like those restored to life.
2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter:
and our tongue with singing.
3 Then said they among the heathen:
'The Lord has done great things for them.'
4 Truly the Lord has done great things for us:
and therefore we rejoiced.
5 Turn again our fortunes O Lord:
as the streams return to the dry south.
6 Those who sow in tears:
shall reap with songs of joy.
7 They that go out weeping bearing the seed:
shall come again in gladness
bringing their sheaves with them.
or

Luke 1:46b-55

1:46b "My soul magnifies the Lord,
1:47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
1:48 for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
1:49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
1:50 His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
1:51 He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
1:52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;
1:53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
1:54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
1:55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

A reading from the first letter to the Thessalonians 5 12-28

We appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for

THEY THAT
SOW IN TEARS
SHALL REAP IN
joy
PSALM 126:5



*God has
called
you.
he will
not fail you.*

this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. Beloved, pray for us. Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Hear the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John 1:6-8, 19-28 Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ.



There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from

Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then

they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptising if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptise with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptising.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

Sentence

Bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, the day of vengeance of our God. Isaiah 61.1-2

Let us now engage in some quiet reflection, or conversation and sharing, responding to the Gospel passage. We may like to write down some key thoughts for further reflection.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know,.

The Pharisees and Levites believed they had worked out God and therefore believed God would do what they expected. We too can fall into this trap even telling God in our prayers how He should work things out. We forget the Lord's Prayer, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

When Jesus came into this world He broke all expectations. Born in an animal shelter, announced incognito by a vagrant desert dweller. There was no royal presentation, no formal ceremony involving dignitaries promoting His importance. His ministry alone spoke of who He is. Why should not Jesus continue to be this way today? The fact is how he chooses to be present in our lives is up to him. The evidence of His work is how our faith grows when we trust God this way. He reveals Himself within our souls, far more than tangible experiences.



prayer-time Now let us continue to offer our prayers and thanksgiving. We pray for healing of the world; We pray for all those who continue to be affected by the terrible violence in Israel and Gaza and the ongoing war in Ukraine. We pray that all parties will work towards an end of the conflict in Ukraine and a new cease fire and the return of all hostages in Gaza and Israel.

🙏 God of peace, be with all those who live in fear and danger. Heal those wounded by hate and conflict. Teach us to love our enemies and live together with understanding and compassion.

Amen.

We pray for family; for members of the parish and wider community, for the life and ministry of the Church, for encouragement in our journey of faith.

We continue to pray alongside those in our parish asking for prayer, Brenda's family as they grieve, Colin, Allison, Pat Foord, , Georgia (Sunaras Mum). Pat V David, Brenda, Joanie, Jo Jan, Joy I, Leanne, Daniella, Joyce and Ted, Mary R, Jac Bishop; Eileen Cook; Yvonne Scrutton; Catherine Cooling; Ursula Pridham; Trish McD; Barbara Webber; Tom Arnold; Nicholas & Ben; Sue & Frank Thomas; Gordon Russell; Emily and her family; Trish Simon; Christina and any others we wish to remember, either silently or aloud.



Let us say the Lord's Prayer Together.

Our Father

Prayer of the Day

Eternal God,
you sent John the Baptist
to prepare the way for the coming of your Son:
grant us wisdom to see your purpose
and openness to hear your will,
that we too may prepare the way for Christ
who is coming in power and glory
to establish his rule of peace and justice;
through Jesus Christ our Judge and our Redeemer,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever, and ever. Amen.



Conclude the meal with the following prayer together.

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be amongst us and remain with us always. Amen.**

• Intentional connection beyond your home

After the Table Service spend some time reaching out to others, a member of your family, or someone who does not have family, or a friend, someone in your community who may be alone and would welcome a call or message from you. Let God guide you to the person or persons with whom you should connect. Contact them. Start a conversation: How have you been keeping, what about this changing weather or hope you are keeping well, or I was just thinking of you and decided to call

