



Advent candles

Traditionally at St Thomas' we have an Advent wreath with five candles: one for each Sunday of the season plus one for Christmas Day. Today's candle is rose-pink and is lit by the priest as we recite this prayer:

We beseech thee to listen to our prayers, O Lord, and by the grace of thy coming enlighten our darkened minds: Thou who livest and reignest with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

CHRISTMAS

The PCC has agreed that, with the Covid restrictions, we will have a **Parish Eucharist on Christmas Morning at 9.45am** but no Midnight Mass or Crib Service on Christmas Eve this year. Numbers strictly limited to 35. Booking sheet with the Sidesman.

COFFEE & TOILETS

While we still cannot meet in the hall for coffee, the toilets are accessible. Ask the sidesman for the key.

Gaudete Sunday

The third Sunday in Advent is called Gaudete Sunday, the day when we light the pink candle on the Advent wreath (hence the 'pink candle' Sunday). Gaudete means 'rejoice'. This day reminds us of the joy that is to come, and serves, amid this season of penance, as a kind of 'break' when we recall the hope we have because of the coming of Our Lord Jesus.

PRAYERS

We pray for all those in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any other adversity at this time; including: Phil, Pam Swabey, Joan Bishop, Ken Allbon, and Jean Burges,



PRAYER REQUESTS

Parish prayer requests may be sent by email to Fr. Herbert or via Trevor using email, telephone or through his letterbox..

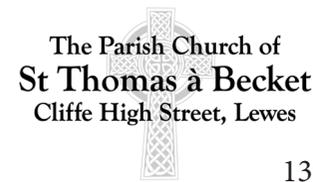
MASKS

A reminder that, apart from those who are exempt, masks must be worn while in church but may be removed to receive Communion.



CHRISTMAS MUSIC

We look forward to welcoming the Lewes Singers to St Thomas' on 20th December for their Christmas recital of seasonal music. Numbers strictly limited due to Covid. For tickets and further details contact Sue Hammond.



13th December 2020
ADVENT III
'Gaudete Sunday'



The Collect

O Lord Jesu Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee: Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Epistle – 1 Corinthians 4.1-5

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgement: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God.

The Gospel – St. Matthew 11.2-10

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? a prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.



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SERMON

COLLECT - to be said every day in Advent

ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last

day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.



As I am sure you will have heard in reports, this year has seen early and increased sales of Christmas trees as our world has rightly needed some joy amid all the gloom of our days. In addition people have been preparing their 'Christmas bubbles' with those with whom they may meet for celebration.

Meanwhile such preparations are echoed by the continued expectation of Advent and the coming of Christ. The earlier verses to our gospel reading today concern Jesus instructing the 12 disciples on the great mission to go out and preach that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. Then Jesus went into the cities and here, as we have heard today, is met with the disciples of John the Baptist coming to Him.

John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, you will recall, was arrested and imprisoned by Herod for denouncing his marriage. Presumably he now hears about the miracles and wonderful works of Jesus and wonders if Jesus is the promised Messiah about whom he was preaching in the Wilderness. This questioning was the stirring of faith in Jesus within John's mind and heart. So John sends his disciples to meet Jesus and asks 'Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?'

Jesus' answer to that question is for those disciples to return and say to John about the things they have seen themselves – 'The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.' Jesus wishes John to see that this is the fulfilment of prophecy.

Notice that Jesus does not say directly that He is the Messiah but instead presents His miracles, healings and works for John to ponder and believe. That was the invitation to John and is the invitation to us all – to look, ponder, see and believe. Jesus' proclamation was the fulfilment indeed of prophecy where Isaiah says 'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, then shall the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing.'

The miracles which Jesus had already performed were those prophesied by Isaiah, for all to see here, including John. These miracles are all signs of God's coming kingdom in Christ. Those who believe and do not take offence are those who will enter God's kingdom.

With John's disciples having departed back to him Jesus continues to address the crowd

concerning John saying 'What went ye out into the wilderness to see?', who is this man in prison?, a prophet?. Jesus tells them 'Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet for this is he of whom it is written 'Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee'. John's heralding of the coming Messiah was in fulfilment of the words of Malachi in the Old Testament. Jesus says John is more than a prophet because in John bearing witness to the one who is greatest, Christ the coming Messiah, prophecy is being fulfilled – he is the messenger who came ahead of Christ proclaiming the coming Messiah to the people.

So, in conclusion, the pinnacle of Jesus' discourse is that the poor shall have the gospel preached to them, that is the underlining message to one and all that we should receive the coming Christ and His gospel of forgiveness and salvation. John heralded the coming Messiah with that message.

May we have ears open to hear and eyes open to see with faith to believe. John's question 'Art thou He that should come..?' is the question to each of us in this lovely season of Advent as we await with joyful expectation the coming Christ Messiah. Amen.

Fr Herbert.