

Week 2: Repentance

Opening prayer

God of mercy,
guide us as we seek to straighten the paths of injustice
and prepare a way for you.
Lead us in your ways as together we bring about change
for the good of all. Amen.

(Light the second candle in your Advent wreath)

Scripture (Matthew 3:1-12)

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.'

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 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? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father", for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. 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.

'I baptise 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 baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 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.'

Reflection

John fulfils the words of the prophet Isaiah, who told of a voice crying out in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. During this Advent season, we are also preparing the way of the Lord. We are called to repentance.

It is an opportunity to think about the times when we have not got things quite right. The times when our actions have hurt others or had negative consequences – whether for the people closest to us, for our community or our world.

We reflect today on the times when we have placed our needs over the rights of our sisters and brothers living in poverty. The times when we have prioritised convenience over protecting the environment.

Repenting is not just about saying sorry. It is about changing our ways and trying to live differently. We are called to straighten paths, by looking at what is crooked and unjust in our world and playing our part in transforming these systems and situations for the good of all.

For discussion

- + Repentance is about a change of mind and heart. What change of mind or heart could help you prepare a way for the Lord this week?
- + What paths need to be straightened in our world today? Where do you see unjust situations or systems?
- + How will you follow the example of John the Baptist and raise your voice to speak out for what is right and important?

Closing prayer

Christ, our Redeemer,
we wait in hope for your coming.
May we be found ready at all times,
alert to the needs of others
and eager to answer your call.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Help us to see your light
reflected throughout creation, and

shining in all our brothers and sisters
wonderfully made in your image.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Fill us with the warmth of your love
and guide us in the way of peace
so that together we may strive
for a future free from war.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Lead us to work together
to share the warmth of your mercy
and build a better world
lit by your compassion for all.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Amen.