

3rd Sunday of Advent

GAUDETE



John the Baptist said: “there stands among you – unknown to you - the-one-who- is-to-come, I am not fit to undo his sandal strap. “The-one-who- is-to-come” refers to Jesus present the most people unbeknownst to them. Advent is not the time of waiting. It is the time of arrival. Christ is now among us. He is standing here and he waits for us to see him, but he is already here.

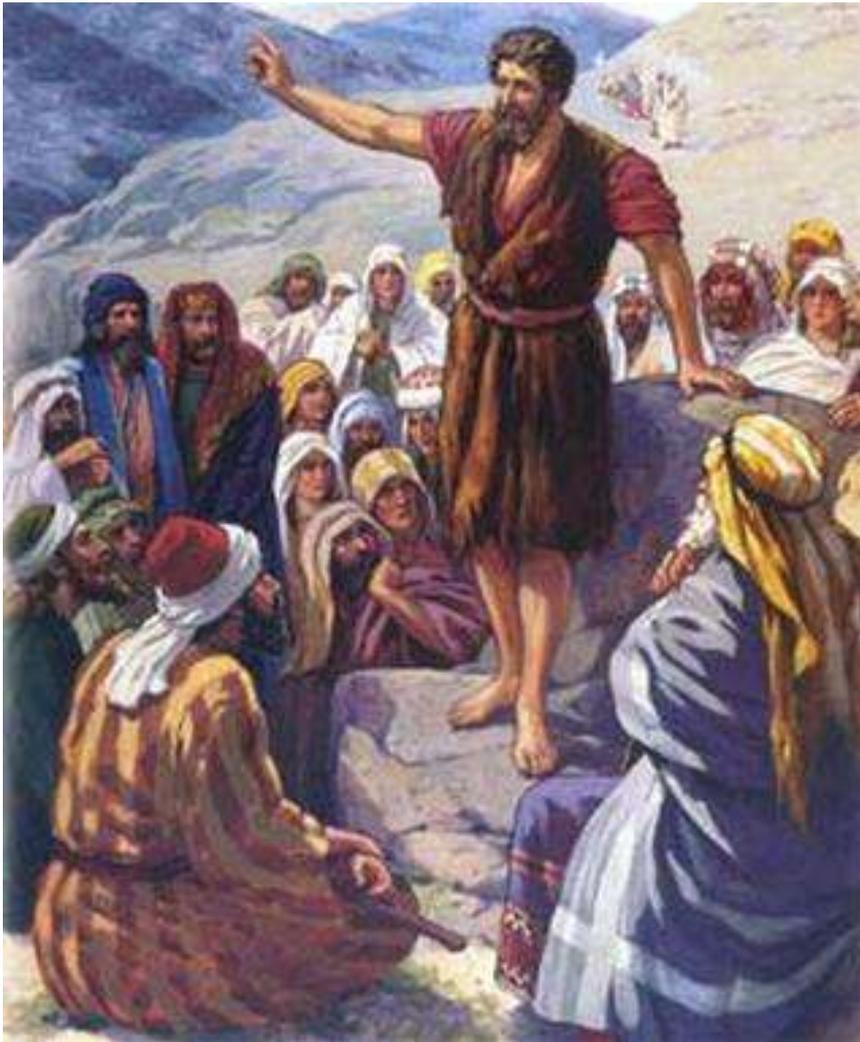
Isaiah 61:1-2. 10-11

I exalt for joy in the Lord

John 1:6-8. 19-28

John the Baptist declares that he is not the-one-who- is-to-come. His task is to prepare the way for the coming Saviour.

Reflection



"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make a straight way for the Lord'"

Advent!

Advent is quite modern in Church terms: c. 4th century. In other words, wasn't celebrated at ALL in the Christian world for nearly 400 yrs.

The Pagans saw the world as a great cosmic struggle between the powers of darkness and the powers of light. In the autumn, they noticed that **darkness** seemed to be gaining the upper hand. They saw light and darkness as two sort of giant wrestlers struggling for mastery. At this time of year, when they saw that darkness was winning; light (or the sun) seemed to be getting weaker; would darkness completely conquer light? Dark days; shorter and shorter days. By December 21 you could be forgiven for thinking that light was utterly defeated.

But wait. **After** 21st, they noticed a small glimmer of hope. Was light having one last skirmish? Was it possible that it would even **OVERCOME** darkness? Yes, it was getting renewed strength (bit like wounded hero in the old Saturday matinee cowboy films when I was a boy! We left one Saturday with him pinned against rock with the baddie ready to stab him. By the following Saturday there was a sudden burst of strength and he flips the baddie over and starts pinning HIM down. Great cheers all round!

Well pagans didn't have cowboy films or Saturday matinees but they DID rejoice when they saw light beginning to push darkness off; as days began to get longer. Darkness was getting weak; the sun was regaining strength. So, these pagans celebrated the triumphal return of sun. They invented a sort of 'sun-feast' marking turn of the sun.

When Christians came along, they took over this pagan idea. They said: 'This is a pretty good idea you've got here, and after all, we know that if you're REALLY talking about darkness and light: the only **REAL** darkness is darkness of sin and the darkness of death... and the only true light that conquers **THEM** is Jesus.'

So, what the Christians did, was to take out middle letter ('U') from sun and replace with an 'O'. So 'sun-feast' became the feast of the Son of God. They made this time of year a time when the great struggle would **begin** to be won; when sin/darkness would be overcome by the light of world coming into world; Jesus, the S_O_N of God.

They invented Advent, as a time to think about that great struggle, to pray for an end to darkness, to look forward, with longing, with 'joyful expectation', for the coming light.



Advent marks the time when darkness reaches its greatest power but it marks **the turning of the tide**, when the sun becomes stronger. So Advent became,

and still remains for us, **A TIME WHEN THE TIDE WILL TURN.**

Today: The Gospel contrasts John Baptist with Jesus himself. John came ‘only as a witness to speak for the light’; ‘he was not the light’ himself. ‘The Word, (Jesus) was the true light’.

Advent is a challenge. It comes to us very forcefully with the question: ‘What is the struggle in your life and mine?’ Advent asks: ‘What do **you** want to overcome?’ Advent asks: ‘What darkness in YOUR life and in YOUR world would you like to see reversed?’

What breakthrough would you and I want for this new (Church’s) year?
What tide would we like turned back?

All of us..... to become more understanding? kinder? more forgiving? Less addicted? More chaste? Holier? Closer to God?Better people? That people would like us? That our job or our marriage would flourish? That we would get a job? That our children would change? - [or our parents!?]That school would be better for us?

Apart from an end to the pandemic, what dark things in our life would we like to see changed? ... What theme or thread would **we** pick out to run through this year 2021 - soon beginning?

Here’s a suggestion: if want to roll back some of that darkness, I suggest the thought of “HEALING”. It’s an incredible fact: you and I have within us - within our very look, within our own hands, with our own lips - power to heal. A gesture can make somebody feel better.

- A smile.
- How we answer the phone.
- A courteous note.
- An apology given.
- A word of warmth and affection.
- Reaching out to someone.

Simple things; yet we can, by them, heal hearts and souls - and often even bodies.

We’ve got that power. **USING** that power can be goal for Advent - A sort of New Church’s Year resolution.

We do live in a time of darkness. OTHER PEOPLE live in darkness. WE can roll back something of that darkness. WE can, at least, **help** the sun to rise. WE can, somehow make the day brighter for everyone - just by our glance, our word, our look, by our unspoken love.

And yet – remember - we can't do this without Jesus, 'the TRUE light'.

If darkness is to be rolled back, it is you and I who CAN and WILL help do it.

One final point: we need each other in this struggle. So let's pray for one another this Advent. Let us pray that we may be able to lift EACH OTHER'S darkness. Help to turn the tide. Advent is that kind of season. It is time of 'patient expectation', of patient struggle. We CAN overcome darkness that seems to have us all pinned against wall.

If this world, if this country, if **WE** are going to begin to roll back the darkness, then Advent is the time to begin it.

A new beginning, a time when darkness begins to weaken.

We hope and pray that during OUR lifetime (yours and mine) the S-O-N, Jesus, will begin to rise.

WORDSEARCH

S	E	Y	H	A	J	I	L	E	A	JOHN	WITNESS	LIGHT
E	L	W	N	O	H	I	L	S	T	LEVITES	ELIJAH	PROPHET
S	E	N	H	A	G	R	E	I	S	ISAIAH	PHARISEES	BAPTISE
S	V	N	A	H	H	E	W	T	S	WATER	BETHANY	JORDAN
T	I	O	T	R	S	T	O	P	E			
S	T	J	C	I	E	A	E	A	N			
E	E	T	R	E	S	W	E	B	T			
I	S	A	I	A	H	A	S	E	I			
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P	R	O	P	H	E	T	I	H	A			

