

## DORSET SOUTH AND WEST CIRCUIT

Written Service for Sunday December 6<sup>th</sup> 2020, Advent 2 by Chris Warren.

**Opening:** In the mighty name of God, in the saving name of Jesus, in the strong name of the Spirit,  
We come, we cry out, we watch, we wait, we look, we long, for you.

**Hymn:** Singing the Faith 24 (sung)

Come, now is the time to worship, come now is the time to give your heart.

Come, just as you are to worship, come, just as you are before your God.

One day every tongue will confess you are God, one day every knee shall bow.

Still, the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose you now.

Come now is the time.....

**Prayers:**

**Adoration:** You are holy, Lord, the only God, you do wonders.

You are strong and you are great, you are the most high,

You are the Almighty King, Holy, Holy Father, the King of heaven and earth.

You are the Three and One, Lord God of all,

You are good, all good, the highest good, Lord God, living and true.

Amen

**Thanksgiving:** Lord God we thank you for the great gift of your Son, incarnate among us. As we approach the celebration of Christmas we will remember the heart of the season. Thank you that we are called to share your love with those around us.

Thank you that you have walked with us through this year and you promise to continue with us day by day.

Amen

**Confession:** Holy and strong One forgive our weakness, Holy and wise One, forgive our foolishness.

Holy and loving One, forgive our hardness. Holy and generous One, forgive our selfishness.

Holy and faithful One, forgive our fickleness. Holy and gentle One, forgive us, Holy One, forgive.

Amen

**Reading:** Mark 1 vs. 1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah. 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight'.

John the baptiser appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people from Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel hair, with a leather belt around his waist and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than me is coming after me, I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit'.

**Reading 2:** Singing the Faith 189 verses 1 and 3. (suggested tune: Christ from whom all blessings flow)

Wild and lone the prophet's voice echoes through the desert still,

Calling us to make a choice, bidding us to do God's will:

Turn from sin and be baptised; cleanse your heart and mind and soul.

Quitting all the sin you prized, yield your life to God's control.

With such preaching stark and bold John proclaimed salvation near,

And his timeless warnings hold words of hope to all who hear.

So we dare to journey on, led by faith through ways untrod,

Till we come at last like John to behold the Lamb of God.

**Word:** John the Baptist.

JOHN THE BAPTIST HAD ARRIVED! He may be in the desert but needed water, so he was at a busy Jordan river crossing. This meant that word of his work and words spread fast. The word of prophecy had been silent among the Jews for 100's of years. The nation had tasted freedom with the Maccabees in the 150's BC and until the Romans arrived in 63 B C.

So the expectation that God would soon send them a redeemer was in all their prayers. The last verses in Malachi promised Elijah would come before God intervened. Just in case anyone missed John's point he dressed and ate like Elijah! He promised that someone more powerful than himself was coming, who the people would see as the Messiah/Saviour. John offered HOPE. He quotes Isaiah 40 vs.3 which originally announcing God's salvation for the people in exile in Babylon. Now the promise is given that God will act again as he did before. John showed them how to prepare and make straight paths – to be ready. Repent, let God turn your lives around and be baptised as a symbolic washing. He said having Abraham as their father was not enough. No; repentance was needed.

People would see John as a true prophet as he acted out his message. If I were to go to the pump in Cornhill, Dorchester and pronounce that the Government was going to take over the churches and be dressed like Henry VIII, this is an equivalent in time.

In Hebrews 11, that great hymn to faith, verse 1 reads, 'Faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see'. John gave the Jews a firm promise of HOPE from God. We often use the word hope with a real lack of certainty. It has been used quite a bit recently re. a vaccine. There is hope it will set us free. With faith in God freedom from the wrongs of the past is certain. We can be confident because of Jesus who put his trust in his Father and gave himself in the hope of resurrection. So it is for us.

In this Advent season we can celebrate in faith that God intervenes in creation to offer sure and certain hope in Jesus Christ. In him we can trust for forgiveness, new life and a sharing in love.

We can hope with certainty because God is in control and with us.

**Prayers:** As John called people to prepare themselves through repentance for the coming of Jesus, let us take time to be prepared.

Make us ready to share the good news of Jesus' coming with those who need to hear it.

We pray for the Government as they seek to steer through the challenges. Be with those suffering from covid19 and those caring for them so selflessly.

We remember our workers in retail outlets for whom a second shutdown has been so difficult and for those caring for them.

We remember those working so hard and so quickly to provide a vaccine that is safe and effective.

We pray for those who live in countries not well equipped to deal with the crisis and for those who seek to help them.

May your love be widely felt and experienced. Amen.

**Hymn:** Singing the Faith 182 verses 1,2, and 5. (sung)

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh;

Awake and harken for he brings glad tidings of the King of kings.

Then cleansed be every life from sin; make straight the way of God within,

And let us all our hearts prepare for Christ to come and enter there.

To God the Son all glory be, whose advent sets his people free

Whom with the Father we adore, and Holy Spirit evermore.

**Close:** The Holy God encircle you and keep you safe;  
The mighty God defend you from all dangers;  
The loving God give you his peace. Amen.

Some of the prayers based on those by David Adam.