

## **Sunday 14 December – Third Sunday of Advent**

### **Collect**

O Lord Jesus Christ,  
who at your first coming sent your messenger  
to prepare your way before you:  
grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries  
may likewise so prepare and make ready your way  
by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,  
that at your second coming to judge the world  
we may be found an acceptable people in your sight;  
for you are alive and reign with the Father  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

### **First Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10**

The desert and the parched land will be glad;  
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.  
Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom;  
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.  
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,  
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon;  
they will see the glory of the LORD,  
the splendour of our God.  
Strengthen the feeble hands,  
steady the knees that give way;  
say to those with fearful hearts,  
“Be strong, do not fear;  
your God will come,  
he will come with vengeance;  
with divine retribution  
he will come to save you.”  
Then will the eyes of the blind be opened  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.  
Then will the lame leap like a deer,  
and the mute tongue shout for joy.  
Water will gush forth in the wilderness  
and streams in the desert.

The burning sand will become a pool,  
the thirsty ground bubbling springs.  
In the haunts where jackals once lay,  
grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.  
And a highway will be there;  
it will be called the Way of Holiness.  
The unclean will not journey on it;  
it will be for those who walk in that Way;  
wicked fools will not go about on it.  
No lion will be there,  
nor will any ferocious beast get up on it;  
they will not be found there.  
But only the redeemed will walk there,  
and the ransomed of the LORD will return.  
They will enter Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy will crown their heads.  
Gladness and joy will overtake them,  
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

#### **Psalm 146:4-10**

Happy are those who have the God of Jacob for their help, ♦  
whose hope is in the Lord their God;  
Who made heaven and earth,  
the sea and all that is in them; ♦  
who keeps his promise for ever;  
Who gives justice to those that suffer wrong ♦  
and bread to those who hunger.  
The Lord looses those that are bound; ♦  
the Lord opens the eyes of the blind;  
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; ♦  
the Lord loves the righteous;  
The Lord watches over the stranger in the land;  
he upholds the orphan and widow; ♦  
but the way of the wicked he turns upside down.

The Lord shall reign for ever, ♦  
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations.  
Alleluia.

### **Second Reading: James 5:7-10**

Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

### **Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11**

When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written:

" 'I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way before you.'

I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."