



ADVENT 2A

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

Second Sunday in Advent - Year A

7th December 2025



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

180 STF – O come, O come, Immanuel OR

178 STF – Long ago, prophets knew

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice OR

185 STF – Sing we the King who is coming to reign

Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

Hymn:

707 STF – Make me a channel of your peace OR

732 STF – Day of judgment! Day of wonder!

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

611 STF – Brother, sister, let me serve you OR

416 STF – There's a wideness in God's mercy

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

409 STF – Let us build a house where love can dwell OR

173 STF – Into the darkness of this world

Blessing

The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

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Call to worship

We have come,
Come, O come, Lord Jesus, Immanuel.
May we know your presence here with us, in this advent season.
May we know the light of your love shining through and into our lives.
In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.¹

Hymn:

180 STF – O come, O come, Immanuel OR

178 STF – Long ago, prophets knew

Opening Prayers

A prayer of hope, of justice and of preparation.

Let us pray.

Peaceful and Gracious God,
We thank you today on this second Sunday in Advent,
For fulfilling your promises, spoken through prophets, in your son Jesus Christ,
Bringing chances of hope and peace in the prospect of a new era of justice.

Teach us to live in harmony as one people.
United in Christ our living hope.

We must live through the heartaches and hardships to work towards the reward of a just and equal world.

Give in us, hearts that seek righteousness in action not name alone in the pursuit of truth.

Through this, help us to pave the way for others turning away from sin to the light that shines in our hearts from your presence.

Before the peace and restoration we long for, there must be repentance
To renew hope and peace, opening the way for each of us to live out the purpose woven into our story from the start.

Let us want for nothing in the way of selfish desires in this festive season.

Let us look towards and embrace the new year and the opportunities we can create.

For a new era of justice.
For peace amongst all.
For the hope of all nations.

May your kingdom be here on earth just as it is in Heaven. We ask this in your loving and powerful name.

Amen.²

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Alice Arbon-Maher

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

When did you last send a message? Perhaps you sent one this morning to a friend or member of your family. It might have been a text message, or on Whatsapp or maybe you left a voice note message for someone.

Let's have a show of hands to see who has sent a message today...*[take a moment to do this]*.

We take sending and receiving messages for granted today – it's very easy and we have many different ways to send them.

Just over two thousand years ago it was very different! You couldn't simply pick up a device, type some words and hit the send button. God decided to send a person with a message to share with people to help them get ready for the coming of Jesus – God's chosen one – the Messiah. John the Baptist's message was to tell everyone that they needed to make some changes in their lives. To stop making bad choices and confess the wrong things they had done. Let's imagine for a moment how news about John must have been spread around, with one person telling the next, who tells someone else who passes it on again. Word of this strange and interesting man must have got round fast!

Let's have a go at sharing some good news now – we're going to pass a message from the back of our room/church/space to the front. Who would like to start it off? *(Choose a volunteer: child/young person or adult and whisper the message 'Jesus the Messiah is coming. The Saviour of the world!' They share it with a person who passes it on and so on until it reaches the front and someone tells you the message. The message doesn't need to be passed to everyone in the congregation: maybe one in each row or choose ten people to line up and pass it forward. Keep the pace up! Be ready for the message to have changed and reveal what it should have been).*

Well done everyone for playing your part in passing the message on!

Advent is a time when we do a lot of waiting – waiting for the birth of Jesus, who we know brings good news so we can live well as God's people. In the meantime let's be people who pass on the message that Jesus is coming soon to transform our lives for the better!

Amen.³

Hymn:

189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice OR

185 STF – Sing we the King who is coming to reign

Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

³ All Age Talk written by Gail Adcock

Hymn:

707 STF – Make me a channel of your peace OR

732 STF – Day of judgment! Day of wonder!

Reflections on the readings

Many preachers and teachers alike through the years will share a nugget of wisdom about how to convey to a group the things you'd like them to learn:

- Tell them what you're going to tell them
- Tell them
- Tell them what you've told them.

Beyond the delightfully trinitarian structure here, I'm certain this pattern of teaching is divinely inspired, and demonstrated for us elegantly in the passages from Isaiah, Matthew and Romans given for today.

In these Bible readings, we're being told what's coming and what it means and we're told, following Christ's incarnation, what we're meant to have learned from it and how to respond as we go on. So based on the assumption that we're all quite familiar with the story of Christ's coming at Christmas, we've got the triad here:

- Isaiah tells us that the Messiah is coming and what it means
- Christ comes and John tells us what that means
- After Christ ascends again, we're told by the writer of the letter to the Romans what it means.

As we travel through Advent this year, towards the great celebration of Christmas and the coming of Christ, perhaps it's good to reflect on our understanding of the source materials, the story as it has been told through millennia, even long before Christ's coming, and how we might tell the story now. What are we told it's all about, what does it mean to us that Christ comes, and what are we going to do about it?

Let's start with Isaiah. I wonder what it might look like if the prophet sat in one of our churches throughout Advent and Christmas as we prepare for and celebrate the birth of the promised Messiah now. I wonder if we might witness a shuffling in the seat at least, and if Isaiah might be wondering how to gently question and correct some parts of the narrative.

I wonder if Isaiah might be perplexed at the focus on the sweetness and mildness of the Christ-child in so much of our telling of the story: *'no crying he makes'*, *'Christian children all must be mild obedient, good as he'*, or even on the lowliness of the biblically unevidenced *'Little Donkey'*.

While the figure of the infant Christ undoubtedly teaches us much about God's willingness to become vulnerable like us, weak like us, reliant on others like us, I can't help but wonder if Isaiah might want us to remember that the coming of Christ is not just a lovely event with a bouncing baby at the heart of it, but a moment when the world changes never to change back, that with the Spirit resting on Him, Christ comes as the one in whom it's possible for the lion and lamb to lie down together, in whom equity for the meek and poor become possible, in whom righteousness and terrible judgement are both brought upon the earth.

In 1999, the Churches Advertising Network released an Easter campaign that was somewhat controversial, with Jesus depicted in the style of Jim Fitzpatrick's famous portrait of Che Guevara. Beneath the picture was the slogan 'Meek. Mild. As if.' While the campaign caused all sorts of discussion, it's stuck with me these last 25 plus years, because it cuts right to the core

of our problem I think – we spend so much time making Jesus meek and mild like the infant he was when he entered this world that we forget the radical picture of justice and righteousness that the incarnation unfolds for us. It's a bit neglectful, to say the least, that we've ended up in this position, because Isaiah among others were telling us of this reality so many centuries ago. When Jesus' cousin John comes among the people and warns them of Jesus' coming ministry, we're given another glimpse into the true reality of what Christ's coming to earth means. It's not all cooing and gifts and angels lighting up a Palestinian sky. Christ's incarnation is about shining a light on injustice and wickedness and demonstrating that a kingdom of justice, joy, righteousness and freedom is within reach.

John the Baptist paints a terrifying picture of Jesus with his winnowing fork and readiness to burn away those who are chaff. I haven't seen this picture of Jesus on many church walls recently.

While we resist wrathful and judgemental images and words about God, nonetheless perhaps we should reflect on why we've so easily let the Little Donkey of extra-scriptural legend pervade our narrative, that beast of humility and burden, and so quickly become uncomfortable about the drama of Isaiah and John. This babe born to us at Christmas is kept infinitely infant by our love of the comfortable, that the world knows this story and celebrates with us, and yet so rarely sees the Church, the body of Christ-followers, as those who are first to fight injustice and seek equity for the poor and an ending to powers and dominions that oppress.

In the musical *Hamilton*, there's a great returning lyric, in the form of a question: *'Who lives, who dies, who tells your story?'*

The first two parts of this three part question I think are fairly well answered: Jesus lives, and so though we all die, we all may live eternally.

The third part, who tells the story, bears a slightly more frightening answer I think!

Whether or not we feel skilled or equipped, we are the ones called to tell the story. We are called to know the story, wrestle with it, understand what prophets and sages of ages past were telling us about Jesus, see how he demonstrates these things in his ministry, and then reflect on what we've been taught and not only apply it in our own living, but share the story with others.

In the letter to the Romans, we're reminded that those things already written, our scriptures, are there for our instruction. Not our musings (though I think that's useful too), not our entertainment or historical inquiry, but our *instruction*. We're not just meant to learn the truth about the coming of Jesus, but somehow to live it too.

For the Roman church, the reminder here is that the gospel is for everyone and they should share it joyfully with all.

Perhaps that's a lesson we need to learn again now, but there are other lessons too I think.

Reflecting on our scriptures today, perhaps the lesson to take away is not just that the gospel is for all, but that all of the story needs to be told. Alongside the parables and pastoral pictures we so often feel drawn to comfortably, we're called to remember that Christ comes that a kingdom of justice may be established, and those of us who tell his story must be those who call for this kingdom to come, for justice to reign, for the world to be ever more changed to reflect the image of God and the compassion of Christ.

We are not called to dwell in the stable, but to bring the terrifyingly wonderful news of conquering injustice and bringing of equity and equality that is possible through Christ.

Meek? Mild? As if?

We're called to tell a rebellious story.⁴

⁴ Reflection written by Becki Stennett

Hymn:

611 STF – Brother, sister, let me serve you OR

416 STF – There's a wideness in God's mercy

Prayers of intercession

Holy God,
whose kingdom is justice and joy,
whose desire for humanity is flourishing for all,
help us to know your story intimately.

Help us to look upon the earth as you do:

- to see the broken beauty of creation
- to see the woeful state of the wonderfully created humanity
- to see the terrible imbalance of power, food, resources, between nations and peoples.

Holy God,
whose kingdom is justice and joy,
whose desire for humanity is flourishing for all,
help us to live your story faithfully.

Help us to walk upon this earth as Christ did:

- to challenge oppression and injustice
- to speak up for those who are silenced by others
- to rebel against the status quo which tells us some lives are worth more than others.

Holy God,
whose kingdom is justice and joy,
whose desire for humanity is flourishing for all,
help us to share your story generously.

Help us to speak with others about you:

- to acknowledge that the walk with you can be challenging
- to share the deep joy of knowing you in Jesus
- to be bold when we fear that others don't want to hear the story that has changed the world and can change their lives.

This advent, plant your story deep in us, and help us to be good tellers of the wonderful good news.

This we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Becki Stennett

Take these gifts, O God,
Take the money that has been donated,
The hopes that we carry in our hearts,
Our hands, our hearts, our skills,
And use them to build a better world, here on earth, we pray
Amen.⁶

Hymn:

409 STF – Let us a build a house where love can dwell OR

173 STF – Into the darkness of this world

Blessing

May you rise from this time, inspired.
May you go from this place, uplifted.
May you travel with the light of the Lord in your hearts, this day and always.
Amen.⁷

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker