

6th December 2020 Second Sunday in Advent

Readings

Isaiah 40: 1 - 11

Psalm 85: 1 – 2, 8 - 13

2 Peter 3: 8 -15a

Mark 1: 1 – 8



Fanfare for Jesus

John begins his Gospel with a fanfare – *Good News! Good News! This is the story of Jesus Christ the Son of God!*

He goes on to say how it all happened just as, long ago, the prophet Isaiah said it would. The promised Christ would come, and he would be announced by a servant of God going before him. The forerunner would challenge everyone who heard him, to get ready to meet their Messiah. *Get straight with God and go on to live lives of holiness* would be his clear trumpet call.

The servant messenger was another John – the Baptist. He did call the people to get ready – to be baptised in water as a sign they had turned back to God, washing away all their sinfulness of character and everyday lifestyle. Crowds came from all over Judaea, Galilee and beyond, responding to his call and were baptised west of the river Jordan near Aenon.

It is difficult to determine the exact relationship between Jesus and John. Their mothers, Mary and Elizabeth being related, it is highly likely they could have spent times together before John went off to join religious communities in the Sinai desert. I like to imagine the two very different young men discussing the turbulent political times in which they were living, searching the scriptures like these words of promise from the prophet Isaiah. They may have questioned, even argued about how the Messiah would come and what would be the nature of the Kingdom he would establish. It seems John was more traditional in his thinking. He pictured a powerful, avenging God of justice leading his armies to victories as of old. If that was so he would find it hard to understand what he later saw and heard of Jesus' ministry.

Those differences caused John restless nights when he was imprisoned, waiting in the great Black Fortress of Machaerus. Just before the dreadful night when Salome danced and King Herod Antipas brutally murdered him, John sent a message to Jesus – *I've told people that I believe you are the Christ. Are you really the one we've been waiting for so long?* Jesus' reply reveals the difference in their thoughts about the Kingdom of God. *Tell John what you see. Tell him how the sick are being healed, how evil is being overthrown. Tell him about the power of faith, the joy of the poor, how people are being reconciled and the cruelly treated are getting justice.* In other words, the Kingdom is about truth and faith and love. There is no earthly power that can finally claim victory against the forces of love – because God IS love!

The second Advent candle represents Faith and our trust that divine love is all conquering. I believe that because in life and ministry I have seen it and rejoice in the Kingdom of Love. The candle is a reminder that we have a twofold share in working for Jesus' Kingdom – in getting ready for Jesus to come into every life and every community across the world. First, we make it known in our testimony and in our worship, and then by living the way of the Kingdom as Jesus taught it. That involves purity of heart and life, working for peace, putting others before self, comforting the sick in body and mind, caring for the poor and seeking justice for them, daily acts of kindness.....

And so our lives will be a '*Fanfare for Jesus*'.

If all that seems too much why not read the Gospel passage again and note John's extra promise – *Jesus will baptise you, not just with water but with the Holy Spirit* – all the love-power of God! The Holy Spirit baptism is the foundation of the Church – of God's amazing *love community*.

A PRAYER

Lord, keep me trusting and expecting your Kingdom. Make my life a fanfare which announces your presence.

