



GOD'S WORD FOR THIS WEEK

The Third Sunday of Advent

*'Jesus came to John the
Baptist'*

Painting by: Richard Hubal

The Collect for the Third Sunday of Advent

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 and the Holy Spirit,
one God, world without end.

The Advent Collect

Almighty God,
Give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light
now in the time of this mortal life
in which your Son Jesus Christ
came to us in great humility;
that on the last day
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

The First Reading

Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11

⁶¹The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion -

to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,

the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

⁸ For I the Lord love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;*
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

⁹ Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.



These are words of great hope from the writer of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and truly well known throughout faithful congregations the world over. Here, through the prophet's writing, we are given a clear glimpse at the heart of God and should be under no illusion about God's intentions for us as individuals and holistically throughout this world.

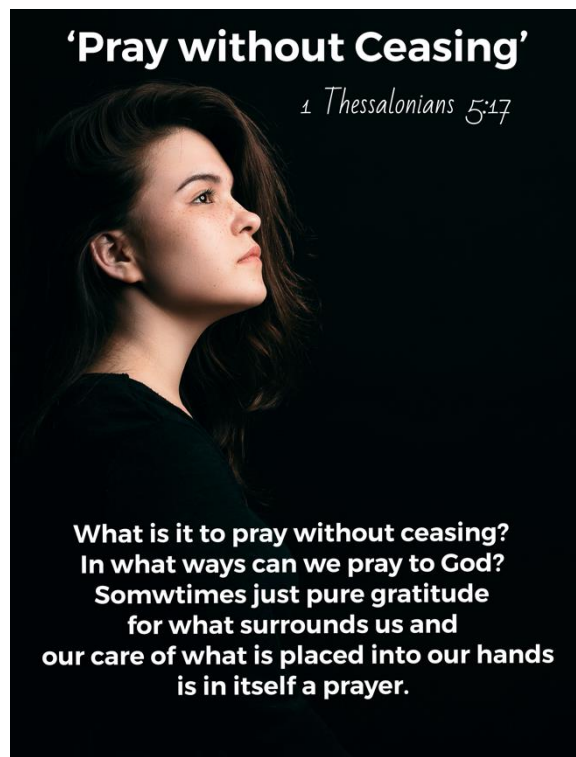
It's easy to apply these words to the person of Jesus as the one sent by God to achieve all these things. Read through the first part of this Scripture in particular again and recognise these words at work within the life and person of the Christ.

The Epistle Reading

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets,* ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

²³ May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound* and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.



The Gospel Reading

John 1: 6-8, 19-28

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹ This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.'* ²¹And they asked him,



‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the prophet?’ He answered, ‘No.’ ²²Then they said to him, ‘Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’ ²³He said, ‘I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord” as the prophet Isaiah said.

‘A Voice Calling’ Dr. Ken Baker

24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, ‘Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?’ ²⁶John answered them, ‘I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.’ ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Last week we spent some time considering the wonderful courage of John the Baptist and his effect on those around him. We heard that ‘all the people in Jerusalem’ were coming to see John and be baptised by him. This week our picture of this remarkable man is broadened again as he is faced with questions about his own presence. He was quick to assure those who asked that he was not the Messiah and that he was not worthy to tie Jesus sandals. Quite often the most progressive disciples of Christ are those who are humble about who they are.

