

Reflections for Sunday 12th December 2021

3rd Sunday of Advent

Preparing the Way for the Lord

John the Baptist stands as a dramatic, but mysterious figure on the threshold of the gospel. He has a vital role, especially in the beginning of the public life and ministry of Jesus, but he seems somehow at the edge, on the margins of these great events. He preferred to be in the wilderness – out in the open country, away from the centres of people and power. But crowds of people came to find him, came a long way to hear his message, and his call to baptism as a sign of a new beginning.

The church probably needs some people who are close to the centre, and the places of power, but that can also be a dangerous place to be. The Bible, and the history of the church, are full of examples of the dangers of living too close to power, and of how comfortable and seductive that can be. In every age the church also seems to need some people out at the edge, and on the margins, like John the Baptist, who didn't hesitate to criticise and challenge those who hold power.

And, as we remember during Advent, John also had the humble task of 'preparing the way' (in the words of Isaiah chapter 40), and pointing to the Messiah who was coming, and declaring:

Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world

(John chapter 1, verse 29)

And we have a similar calling to share in that vital task of 'preparing the way', by declaring the good news that the Kingdom of God is near and close at hand, staying alert to the signs of God's presence and power in our world, and being ready to point to where God is at work.

John the Baptist had a humble, but vital task, and so do we, as we are called to help to 'prepare the way' for God in Christ to be revealed in the lives of people, and in the life of our world today.

Revd John Waller

Loving God, in this advent season,
help us to prepare anew the way for your coming
into our hearts, our lives, and our world.
Amen.

Bible readings: Zephaniah 3. 14-20; Philippians 4. 4-7; Luke 3. 7-18

Story: 'Jesus is baptised' (based on the four gospel accounts)