

## **Advent 2 2025**

We are approaching the halfway of our Advent journey and once again we find ourselves on the banks of the river Jordan with John the Baptist. Jesus himself describes John as the greatest of the prophets. John feared no one. He was totally devoted to Jesus, the one to come. It would be hard to visualize John in Vogue or any fashion magazine. More likely this wild man of the desert dressed in camel's hair, and eating locusts and wild honey, would be depicted as a comic character holding up a sign above his head that read, "repent, the end is near". John would be a long way from the places of power and would see the world from a wilderness perspective, aware of the experiences of those who sought to follow him as excluded from mainstream community life of the times and enduring the abuse of those who exercised control and power.

Do you like bring reprimanded or called to account for something that you may have done or not done, or mistake you have made, or failure to have responded to an invitation, ignored someone when they have spoken to you, did something in the past you now regret or acted in a way that brought shame or disrepute on yourself or others. Well, I have for some of those reasons and then feel uncomfortable, and while I may

say sorry there remains a level of discomfort. After all we are all frail human beings and are not perfect.

In a similar way and perhaps a little stronger ,as I said earlier ,most of us feel perhaps a little skirmish to the call of repentance , not the softer word reprimanded ,when we are confronted with a past event we now regret, brought to account for less than wholesome or generous behaviour towards others, fail to comply with expected community norms, or are more concerned about our ourselves than others. It is something even the best of us from time to time may encounter. It appears to me in our secular community that to say sorry is often the best we can do without any real recognition of what we have done or not done. Nor is there often any recognition that we need to change our ways. So often we seek to justify our actions. The word sin is avoided, and any sense that we can all act and do and say things at times that we regret are not spoken about. There are of course many examples where people have changed their ways and behaviour for the better of themselves and the wider community while others will seek to use the legal system to protect themselves.

Repentance is an unattractive idea and a negative one. It does involve grief and remorse. John proclaims repentance but it is not to be read in a negative way but rather as a restorative liberating

and positive way forward. In both Hebrew and Greek, it means a change of behaviour, a new direction, a change of heart. John is calling those to whom he is speaking to move forward, to look to the future with hope, to change their values and to recreate a time when God's dream will be fulfilled. John proclaims his message in the desert as a means of warning that without change the future is dubious and lacking certainty. While not wanting to be alarmist scientists across the world are reminding us that if we ignore the signs that the creation is telling us then we do so at our own peril and the future for our children and grandchildren is at risk.

The challenge for us all at this time whether we have faith or not is to ensure that we acknowledge the part we all play in the stewardship of the creation and as people of faith do my values and lifestyle align with God's Kingdom

The season of Advent is:

- A time of waiting.
- A time of reflection.
- A time for preparation.
- A time for dreaming and hoping.
- A time for ditching

Advent reminds us that 'waiting upon God' is an important ingredient in our Christian journey, and that our dreams, may not be God's. Advent reminds us to be patient, alert and ever ready to embrace the disturbing actions of the Holy Spirit of God.

Advent calls us to prepare to receive and celebrate the holiness and mystery of life as experienced and told in the story of the Christ child.

As we gather as a faith community this day, our very act of worship, the words, symbols, and actions of our Eucharist together is a sign of new life, hope and promise as we say in the words of the second form of the Great Thanksgiving prayer:

'At the dawn of time you wrought from nothing,  
a universe of beauty and splendour,  
bringing light from darkness and order from chaos.'

The promise of God to send forth one who is to execute justice and righteousness, God's hope, and dreams, is the message of our reading from Isaiah.

So, as we gather on this the second Sunday in Advent, I invite you to continue to journey with me and the whole Church, to dream about the possible, to set aside the distractions, to revisit the great Christian claim and fundamental, that whoever we are, and whatever the distractions and challenges, we face God loves us, and we are to love another.

Dreaming the impossible dream for a creation and humanity at one with God and each other is the dream of God. He offers this dream and invites us to share it with him.

May your dreams this Advent be for God's Kingdom. May they be filled with passion, creativity, and rejoicing, confident that in our dreams for a better world, so there will be God.

Amen