Advent 3, Year B, 13.12.2020

*Mystery of the Messiah*

*John 1.6-8,19-28*

*Religious leaders are dispatched to question John the Baptist as to his identity, wondering if he might be the Messiah. John repeatedly answers in the negative, but leaves them with an intriguing possibility that the Messiah is among them – but they don’t realise it yet.*

**Welcome and introduction**

**Prayer:**

Some of us are weary or downhearted.   
Still we say: let our hearts be glad, God is always here.  
Let us approach God with confidence, because  
God has always been with us.   
Let our hearts be glad!  
**Amen.**

**Prayer for lighting the 3rd Advent candle:**

**Lord Jesus, light of the world,**

**John told the people to prepare,**

**for you were very near.**

**As Christmas grows closer day by day,**

**help us to be ready to welcome you now.**

**Amen.**

**Hymn Hark a herald voice is sounding**

Hark! A herald voice is calling; “Christ is nigh,” it seems to say;  
“Cast away the dreams of darkness, O ye children of the day.”  
  
Startled at the solemn warning, let the earth-bound soul arise;  
Christ, her sun, all sloth dispelling, shines upon the morning skies.  
  
Lo! The lamb, so long expected, comes with pardon down from heaven;  
let us haste, with tears of sorrow, one and all to be forgiven;  
  
so when next he comes in glory, wrapping all the earth in fear,  
may he then as our defender on the clouds of heaven appear.  
  
Honour, glory, virtue, merit, to the Father and the Son,  
with the co-eternal Spirit, while unending ages run. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Lord, we hear so many different voices around us.  
We confess it isn’t always easy to recognise which ones come from you,  
or to find our own voice and be true to it.

**Help us, O Lord.**

Lord, forgive us for the times when we try to speak with a voice that is not our own.

**Help us, O Lord.**

For the times when we deliberately ignore other people’s voices  
because we don’t understand what they are saying, or we don’t like what we hear.

**Help us, O Lord.**

We ask you to forgive us for the times we don’t even hear the voices of others  
because we are so taken up with ourselves.

**Help us, O Lord.**

Forgive us, Lord, and grant us a listening ear.  
**Amen**.

**The Absolution**

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins

and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

**The****Collect***, the special prayer for today*

God for whom we watch and wait,  
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son:  
give us courage to speak the truth, to hunger for justice,  
and to suffer for the cause of right, with Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## The Reading John 1: 6-8, 19-28

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

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, ‘I am not the Messiah.’ And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the prophet?’ He answered, ‘No.’ Then they said to him, ‘Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’ He said,   
‘I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,  
“Make straight the way of the Lord”’,  
as the prophet Isaiah said.

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

Address

**Hymn Be still for the presence of the Lord**

Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy one, is here.  
Come bow before him now in reverence and fear.  
In Him no sin is found, we stand on Holy ground  
Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy one, is here.  
  
Be still for the glory of the Lord is shinning all around.   
He burns with Holy fire, with splendour he is crowned  
How awesome is the sight, our radiant King of light  
Be still for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.  
  
Be still for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.  
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister His grace.  
No work too hard for him, in faith receive from him.  
Be still for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

**Bless the Gifts**

Lord Jesus, you gave everything for us.  
As we give you our gifts, we offer you all that we have, and are, and will be,  
praying that our church, and our mission,  
may reach out so that others may come to share in your risen life.

**Amen.**

**Prayers**

God of all truth and all integrity,  
may those in the shadows of despair  
**be blessed with the light of hope;**

may those in the shadows of exhaustion  
**be blessed with the light of rest;**

may those in the shadows of slavery  
**be blessed with the light of empowerment;**

may those in the shadows of loneliness  
**be blessed with the light of companionship;**

may those in the shadows of grief  
**be blessed with the light of comfort;**

and may all your people, tempted by the shadows of pride,  
**be blessed with the light of humility.**  
**Amen**.

*We sing the* ***Lord’s* *Prayer***

**Blessing**

May your heart be at peace, and your mind be at rest.  
May you be confident in who you are,  
and share God’s gifts of light, hope and grace  
with those you meet and those you pray for.

and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

be amongst you and remain with you, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**The Peace**

The peace of the Lord be always with you

**and also with you.**

**Hymn Light of the world you stepped down into darkness**

Light of the world you stepped down into darkness  
opened my eyes, let me see beauty that made this heart adore you,  
hope of a life spent with you  
  
*Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God.  
You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me*  
King of all days oh so highly exalted, glorious in heaven above.  
Humbly you came to the earth you created, all for love's sake became poor  
  
I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross