

Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Advent 2024, Week 3

Reader 1: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (Jn 1:6-8,19-28)

There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.

A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" he not only declared, but declared quite openly, "I am not the Christ". "Well then", they asked "are you Elijah?" "I am not" he said. "Are you the prophet?" He answered "No". So they said to him "Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?" So John said, "I am as Isaiah prophesised:

a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight path for the Lord.

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, "Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah and not the prophet?" John replied, "I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap". This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader: Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone: A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader: Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2: Reflection on the Gospel

If you participated in our diocese's recent scripture initiative you may recall hearing that when we read from Mark's gospel we are being invited beyond the question 'Did it really happen like that?' to 'How is God seeking to speak to our hearts and minds through this text?'

Over the coming fortnight many of us will prepare to joyfully celebrate the birth of the Son of God, the Word incarnate. Through today's Gospel passage, the witness of John the Baptist is offered to inspire, help and encourage us, mindful that we also live in a fallen and broken world.

Today, in light of the terrible atrocities, wars etc. that abound, many Christians are asking "Where are you Lord in the midst of such terrible pain and suffering?" Through this text the Holy Spirit invites us to the realisation that Christ also stands among us, frequently unknown to us, bearing our burdens, encouraging us not to become despondent or despairing, appealing to us to love one another through the trials and tribulations that cross our thresholds. We must not allow fear deter us from doing the right thing. Indeed, it is good to recall that, anointed by the same Spirit, we are fully resourced to carry the good news of Jesus to others.

Lord, while we value and appreciate when others are 'a witness to speak for the light' to us, we frequently need help to be such witnesses ourselves. Grant us a share in the courage and conviction of John the Baptist, and inspire in us words and actions that will draw others to you. Amen

Silence

Leader: I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

Leader: Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

Group returns to page 44 of Advent booklet.