

PARISH NEWSLETTER & HOME WORSHIP SUPPLEMENT
Third Sunday of Advent, 13th December 2020

Dear Parishioners,

Today we give thanks that the COVID-19 virus is relatively under control in our country and our State. This means that restrictions have been eased such that we can now have twice as many people in the church (2 sq metre rule). However, we still have to maintain physical distancing of 1.5 m if we are not from the same household, must still use the hand sanitiser and still stay away if we have any cold or flu-like symptoms.

Also today, we welcome and thank members of the Nambucca District Band after our service who will be providing us with a program of Christmas Carols. Please grab a cuppa and come back into the church to enjoy this unexpected treat.

On Tuesday, we will be welcoming into Holy Trinity all the children from the Macksville Public School SRE classes for a special SRE Christmas Concert. It will be a blessing to engage with these children again after not being able to go into the school for SRE since March. Please pray that they will receive and welcome the true Christian message.

Our scripture readings for today focus on justice and hope. Isaiah speaks of the day when God's anointed one will bring good news to the poor and hope to the oppressed. We know that Jesus took this passage to refer to himself as the anticipated Messiah which is why we read passages from Isaiah during Advent.

The psalmist rejoices that God restores the fortune of his people. The Israelites have come through a difficult period in their history. We also have come through a difficult period in our church life through the impact of COVID-19.

As we await the return of Christ with an attitude of expectancy (the theme for our Advent study), we too can look forward to such rejoicing.

Be encouraged, be blessed – God is at work in our Parish!

Rev Clyde

Psalm 126

¹ When the Lord turned again the fortunes of Zion:

then were we like those restored to life.

² Then was our mouth filled with laughter:

and our tongue with singing.

³ Then said they among the heathen:

‘The Lord has done great things for them.’

⁴ Truly the Lord has done great things for us:

and therefore we rejoiced.

⁵ Turn again our fortunes, O Lord:

as the streams return to the dry south.

⁶ Those who sow in tears:

shall reap with songs of joy.

⁷ They that go out weeping, bearing the seed:

shall come again in gladness, bringing their sheaves with them.



Bible Reading

Please take your bible and read:

John 1:6-8, 19-28



Reflection on John 1:6-8, 19-28, Third Sunday of Advent **Point the way to Jesus by Rev Clyde**

‘There was a man sent from God whose name was John.’ (v.6) He was quite a character and attracted much attention through his wild appearance, his fearless preaching, and his practice of baptizing people (including circumcised and devout Jews) who confessed repentance for having turned away from God.

The Jewish authorities wanted some answers from this man called John the Baptist. They were wondering whether John might be claiming to be the promised, and much anticipated, Messiah. Or if not the Messiah, then might he be claiming to be one of the Old Testament figures who was supposed to appear just before the end of history.

So, they sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask John the Baptist two questions. “Who are you?” and “Why are you baptizing?”

Well, John openly confessed to his activities and readily gave them an answer. But, he didn’t quite answer the questions that they asked. Instead he did something that is the lesson that you and I should take away today - he pointed them to Jesus.

There was a time when I was posted to the RAN’s training ship HMAS Stalwart. Among my many duties I was the Public Relations Officer. I always dreaded having to give interviews because the media were notorious for stirring up controversy over issues that were very hard to answer. The journalists were very skilled at asking questions that would trap you into saying something that was not good media for the Navy or the Government.

Officers who had to deal with the media were given some advice to try to deal with this. We were told, “Determine what it is that you will want to get across to the public. Then give an answer, but make sure that your answer includes the point that you want to make, even if in doing so you do not directly answer the question”. If you listen to some of the more astute politicians being interviewed you will hear them doing this.

Well, this is exactly what John did. John’s whole aim was to prepare the way for Jesus and to point people to him.

So, when the priests and Levites asked him, ‘*Who are you?*’ he didn’t explain who he was but rather pointed them to Jesus: ‘*I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord.*’ (v.23) This quote from Isaiah 40 was understood to be referring to the imminent coming of the Messiah.

And again when they asked him ‘*Why... are you baptizing ...*’, instead of explaining his reasons to them, he again directed them to consider Jesus: ‘*Among you stands one far greater than me who will baptize with fire and the Spirit.*”

John’s message was centred on Jesus Christ, the light of the world; and his goal was that through his preaching all hearers should believe and turn to Jesus, regardless of their condition or attitude. This message is still relevant today to anyone who has not accepted Jesus as Saviour and Lord – come as you are!

As we prepare to celebrate the first coming of Jesus into the world, and as we look forward with anticipation to his second coming, we too should be doing all that we can to prepare the way for the Lord and to point people to him.

We can do this by a number of means:

1. We can point to Jesus by the things we say. Isaiah did it through preaching and prophesying. John did it by preaching and baptising. You and I can do it through our testimony of what Jesus has done in our life.

2. We can also point to Jesus by the way we live. In the first letter to the Thessalonians (5:12-28), Paul encouraged the Thessalonian Christians to do it by the way that they lived and related to one another. Paul provides a list of things that we should strive to live by:

- Give respect to those who minister to you.
- Be at peace with one another.
- Encourage and correct one another.
- Seek to do good to one another.
- Rejoice always,
- Pray without ceasing,
- Give thanks no matter what the circumstances.
- Be open to the working of the Holy Spirit in you.

The challenge to always try to point people to Christ by the way that we live and the way we respond to the circumstances in our life is something that I pray that you and I will never lose sight of. It is not always easy to live like this – it takes some effort and discipline. It takes much prayer for God’s enabling grace. Nevertheless, it is the challenge set for us by today’s passages.

For me, this was something that I always had to be conscious of as a chaplain on a ship. It could have been so very easy as a chaplain (and a parish minister) to fall into a role of being nothing more than a counsellor or a welfare worker who just hands out practical advice and gives referrals to the various support organisations.

But, whilst such assistance is good, the Chaplain has to be more than this – he or she must represent Jesus Christ and continually point people to Jesus as the one who can give them salvation and purpose in life.

And it would also be so easy for a chaplain (and those in ordained or lay ministry) to begin to enjoy the status, recognition, and power of their position such that these things become the motivation of the ministry rather than to bring glory to God by pointing people to Jesus.

Particularly, as we go forward into a new era for the Anglican Church in the Nambucca Valley, we need people like John the Baptist who in his humility did not seek recognition and glory for himself, but rather, pointed people to Jesus.

So, I offer two questions for you and me to ask ourselves on this Third Sunday of Advent:

1. “Am I pointing people to Jesus by what I say and by the way that I live?”

And if I am in a leadership position:

2. “Am I seeking glory for God or for myself?”

Collect

Eternal God,
 you sent John the Baptist
 to prepare the way for the coming of your Son:
 grant us wisdom to see your purpose
 and openness to hear your will,
 that we too may prepare the way for Christ
 who is coming in power and glory
 to establish his rule of peace and justice;
 through Jesus Christ our Judge and our Redeemer,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayers for 6th December 2020 – Thanks Sue Noble

Holy God, as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of Christ our Saviour we ask that you will answer our prayers and make us a holy people, fit to greet Jesus with expectant hearts. May our Church leaders across the Diocese be blessed with wisdom and holiness to guide us through this season of Advent, so that we look to you in all our circumstances, seek to glorify you and bring the love of Christ to others. Help each one of us to know the hope of new life and salvation we have in Jesus and to prepare a place in our hearts and homes for Him.

Lord in your mercy...

Father God, help the leaders of nations to seek that justice and peace which come from the Word of God, may Your Good News reach the poor and the broken hearted, those who are lost and searching, release for those illegally or wrongly imprisoned and an end to the conflicts throughout the world which lead to so much grief and mourning. Bring peace and comfort to our anxious world. We pray for all those who are striving to adjust to a new way of being “normal” in these difficult times as Covid 19 continues globally. We thank you for all those who have worked to produce a vaccine and pray that it will be successful in protecting us. We pray Father, for its efficient and equitable distribution among all nations. Lord God comfort and be with all those who grieve the loss of loved ones due to this pandemic.

Lord in your mercy....

Creator God, we praise you because you set the stars in the heavens and made the oceans flow. All the world was shaped by your hands. We pray for the restoration and protection of your created world as we delight in its beauty. We pray for an end to wild animal trade, for wisdom in the responsibility our nation has to preserve the Great Barrier

Reef and to care for our wildlife, for relief from the fire on Fraser Island. Teach us how to cherish and care for the earth, to share justly and wisely with all people the resources you provide.

Lord in your mercy...

Father God, your son Jesus lived an ordinary life in Nazareth, with human parents, brothers and sisters. He understands the difficulties faced in families. We pray for all of those involved in providing support for troubled families and strengthening of community life. We pray for those who will be lonely or without proper meals this Christmas, for those separated from loved ones, serving overseas in our defence forces, grieving the loss of livelihood or home due to fires and droughts, for those who are ill or in hospital at this time of the year. We especially pray for all in our valley who have not yet heard of the coming of Christ and that this Christmas they may hear and believe the Good News and receive the gift of Your Son.

Lord in your mercy...

Merciful God, as we look to celebrate again the birth of Jesus, increase within us your compassion and mercy for all who are excluded or in need. May your blessing, healing and hope be with all who suffer chronic illness or whose abilities are restricted. Refresh all who are dry and thirsty for relief in their sufferings. May your Spirit be upon your people who are in pain or sickness, those who are anxious or troubled. Bring comfort to those who are grieving. We know Father that you are always present with us, even when sometimes you seem far away. Help us to feel your presence when we pass through dark places, and sustain us and all who suffer through difficult circumstances and sorrow.

Lord in your mercy....

Lord God we pray for wisdom and guidance in the months ahead as we transition into a new parish. Pour out your grace so that we are like-minded, have the same love, are one in spirit and of one mind. Father we pray for a response to our advertised position. Help us to trust that you will provide the right person at the right time to shepherd us. We pray for Rev Clyde, Rev Ros Johnson, Rev Ron Spindler, the interim PC and LLM's. Give them discernment, strength and encouragement as changes take place. Help them to seek you and to walk in your light. Lord in you mercy....

Faithful God, as we continue this Advent journey, teach us to turn to you in times of joy and pleasure as well as we do when faced with fear and challenge. Inspire us; make us hopeful and expectant with your promise of salvation. As we rejoice in you and strive to follow Jesus, let your gentleness and love be made known to others and bring glory to you.

Merciful Father: accept our prayers through, Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray...

Our Father, in heaven,

Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours

Now and forever, Amen.

Christmas Service times:

**10am Wed 23rd Dec Holy Communion @ St Johns,
Nambucca Heads**

5pm Christmas Eve @ All Saints Stuarts Point

11.30pm Midnight Mass, Holy Trinity Macksville

**7pm Christmas Eve Holy Communion Bowraville
Church Hall**

**8am Christmas Day Holy Communion St Johns,
NHeads & St James, Bowraville**

**9.30am Christmas Day Holy Communion Holy
Trinity Macksville**

No Services 27th & 30th Dec.



OUR NEW SOCIALS

to be officially ready by 1st January 2021

Follow us on Facebook to be kept up to date on **information** (if you were already following the Macksville Facebook, no need to do anything – I have just changed the details):

Anglican Parish of Nambucca Valley
@anglicanparishofnambuccavalley

Macksville Anglican Op Shop
@macksvilleanglicanopshop



Search Facebook

The Website is being upgraded as quickly as it can with the combining of both Parish's. Keep an eye out for all the information to be available on here also.

www.nambuccavalleyanglicans.com

Here is a little story that illustrates a point in the homily:

Sometimes it is hard to give thanks and praise God. And yet, it is possible to do so as this story illustrates:

A man called Samuel Scull had settled with his wife and children on a farm in a rather arid part of the country. One night a fierce storm struck with rain, hail, and high wind.

At daybreak, feeling sick and fearing what he might find, Samuel went to survey their loss. The hail had beaten the garden and vegetable patch into the ground: the house was partially unroofed; the chook house had blown away, and dead chickens were scattered about. Destruction and devastation was everywhere.

While standing dazed, evaluating the mess and wondering about the future, he heard a stirring in the timber pile that was the remains of the chook house. A rooster was climbing up through the debris. He didn't stop climbing until he had got on top of the highest board in the pile. He was dripping wet, and most of his feathers were blown away. But as the sun came over the eastern horizon, he flapped his bony wings and proudly crowed.

That old, wet, bare rooster could still crow when he saw the morning sun. And like that rooster, our world may be falling apart, we may have lost everything, but if we trust in God, we'll be able to see the light of God's goodness, pick ourselves out of the rubble, and sing the Lord's praise.