

Closing Prayer

Almighty God,
you sent your Son into a world
where the wheat must be winnowed from the chaff
and evil clings even to what is good.

Let the fire of your Spirit
purge us of greed and deceit,
so that, purified, we may find our peace in you
and you may delight in us.

Grant this through him whose coming is certain,
whose day draws near:
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · Advent 3, Year C²

CPL • LBC Year C Advent 3.odt • 2021-11-25

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*

The Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday between 11 and 17 December inclusive

Principal Service readings

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| Zephaniah 3.14-20 | Song of joy; promise of return for exiles |
| <i>Canticle:</i> Isaiah 12.2-6 or Psalm 146.4-10 | 'with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation' The Lord watches over the oppressed and orphaned |
| Philippians 4.4-7 | Always be joyful and don't worry for God will give you peace |
| Luke 3.7-18 | The proclamation of John the Baptist |

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The proclamation of John the Baptist

⁷John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'

¹⁰And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' ¹¹In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' ¹²Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' ¹³He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.' ¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor

and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

¹⁸So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.
Luke 3.7-18 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

The beginning of the chapter is missed off today's pericope. 3.1-6 describes the setting and states that 'the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert' (3.2). He is linked, as son of Zechariah to the infancy account and its prophecy. John is therefore designated as a prophet, and needs to be listened to. John announces a 'baptism for conversion leading to the forgiveness of sins' (3.3), fulfilling Gabriel's prediction about John (1.77). Conversion (metanoia) is, for Luke a constant element of the good news (see 24.47; Acts 5.31; 10.43; 11.18; 13.38; 26.18).

The question, 'What should we do?' (3.10) is echoed in the response to Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2.37), and serves to fill out John's prophetic mission.

People have expectations of John (3.15), but John disavows a messianic role (3.16). John does the preparatory work for Jesus who is to follow him. Both Luke and Matthew add 'and fire' to Mark's 'Holy Spirit'. Luke picks up the symbolism of fire from 3.9 and uses it again in 3.17. In Luke-Acts it is a reference to Pentecost (Acts 2.3, 19).

Quotations

1

The Church does not dispense the sacrament of baptism in order to acquire for herself an increase in membership but in order to consecrate a human being to God and to communicate to that person the divine gift of birth from God.

Unless you become like this child / Hans Urs von Balthasar. 1988

¹ New Revised Standard Version Bible is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

2

The world does not consist of 100 percent Christians and 100 percent non-Christians. There are people (a great many of them) who are slowly ceasing to be Christians but who still call themselves by that name: some of them are clergymen. There are other people who are slowly becoming Christians though they do not yet call themselves so.

Mere Christianity / C. S. Lewis. 1942

3

The church must suffer for speaking the truth, for pointing out sin, for uprooting sin. No one wants to have a sore spot touched, and therefore a society with so many sores twitches when someone has the courage to touch it and say: "You have to treat that. You have to get rid of that. Believe in Christ. Be converted."

The violence of love / Oscar A. Romero. 1980

Related topics

For further study:

Repentance; eschatology; parousia; soteriology (salvation); kingdom of God; justice; conversion