

Welcome to our Service, wherever you are, to this 3rd Sunday before Advent

God's Word invites saying: *Draw near to me and I will draw near to you*

As an Opening Prayer we will sing our **Confession** in the words of Dear Lord & Father of mankind

1. Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful minds, in purer lives, thy service find,
In deeper reverence praise. In deeper reverence praise

2. Drop thy still dew of quietness, till all our strivings cease:

take from our souls the strain and stress, and let our ordered lives confess

the beauty of thy peace, the beauty of thy peace. *By John Greenleaf Whittier*

Absolution May Almighty God forgive us by the death of his Son and strengthen us to live his risen life in the power of his Spirit all our days **Amen**

Readings Hebrews 9:24-end

24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another -

26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but for salvation.

Mark 1:14-20

14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

17 Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

18 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets.

20 And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

Reflection

Beginnings are important ... as they set the direction of the path ahead.

I always chuckle at the farmer who when asked directions by a lost towny, replied, 'Well, if you want to get there, I wouldn't start from here'

Where is the best place to start?

How did Jesus start his ministry? Mark says *Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying Repent, and believe in the gospel.* "And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me."

3 simple words summarize Christ's and the Christian's message

Repent; Believe; Follow

1st Repent

Repentance is at the heart of the Gospel, and at the start of God's good news for us

'Repent' comes in the Bible at least 32x and 'Repentance' 23x

But what does it mean?

The Hebrew Old Testament word is *shuv*

Primarily it means; to turn back (or away), literally or figuratively; often with the idea of returning to the starting point

The Greek New Testament word is *metanoew* (metanoeo) *noeo* means to think; and *meta* again. To repent is to have 2nd thoughts, to think differently; to reconsider, literally to change your mind. God has called me on many occasions to change my mind - Not to be fickle, and certainly not to alter his Word, but to change my way

Repentance is God's gracious invitation to stop, turn round, & go in a different direction - in his way; in the Jesus way.

To do that it means acknowledging that we've got it wrong, & that we want to be different - to be like him

When Jesus pointed to The *kingdom of God* he was talking about the rule of God in our lives

It takes courage to admit we've made a mistake; it takes humility to apologise, to go back and to start again But that's what Jesus calls us to say & to pray: Lord I'm sorry I've gone my way but now I want to go your way. That's

repentance

2nd Believe Jesus said *It's time to believe the gospel*

Belief is to have faith in, upon, or with respect to a person or thing. Christ's call was and is. to credit him with trustworthiness; it's to trust him personally for truth, transformation, and for paying the cost (in full) for our forgiveness and freedom. Or as Hebrews 9 says: *Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many **once** at the end of the ages, He appeared to put away sin and God's judgement of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And for those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time for salvation* - this is the Gospel

Belief/ faith is accepting the truth and trustworthiness of what Jesus said and did on the cross; and then to entrust our spiritual well-being personally to him.

Faith is when we make a commitment to Jesus, give him our hearts, and welcome him into our lives.

Many people aren't sure of salvation and heaven because they haven't done that.

If you're not sure then make sure - turn from self to Jesus the Saviour and say: *Jesus I trust you and all you did for me on the cross to forgive me. I now give my life to you, and ask you to enter my heart. Lord, live in me and through me now & for always. Amen*

But don't forget the **3rd** word which is: **Follow**

Repentance, and faith, and following, is a personal thing

Jesus came to the seaside and saw two young men casting their nets into the sea, and two more nearby mending their nets with their father .

Never interrupt a fisherman who's concentrating on fishing, or man working hard to please his dad!

But Jesus had other plans for Peter and Andrew, James and John, that would change their lives, families & futures

His call was just two word *Follow Me* - literally: *Hey! Here with Me!* Christianity is about Jesus and Me.... for life!

Following Jesus is not just about a one-off decision, it's about daily discipleship.

It's about walking in the steps of our master whether we like it or not; whether others like it or not; or whether we feel like it or not

Discipleship is doing what Jesus says, living as Jesus showed; and going where Jesus sends.

It was not by coincidence that the first disciples in Acts were called people 'of the Way' because they were following Jesus

Jesus began his ministry by giving us these three life-changing words: Repent, Believe and Follow

And this is the way for us to begin and to end our journey: Repent, Believe and Follow

Song: Thy way not mine O Lord *By Horatius Bonner*

1. Thy way not mine O Lord, however dark it be

Lead me by thine own hand, choose out the path for me

2. Smooth let it be or rough, it will be still the best

Winding or straight, it leads right onward to thy rest

3. Not mine, not mine the choice in all things great and small;

Be thou my guide, my strength, my wisdom, and my all.

Creed In response to the words 'We believe' we say **and trust in him**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being, the one for whom we exist?

We believe **and trust in him**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us, and rose again?

We believe **and trust in him**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God, and makes Christ known in all the world?

We believe **and trust in him**

Do you believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

We believe **and trust in him** **Amen**

We turn to God in **prayer**

Collect for today

Almighty Father, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of all; govern the hearts and minds of those in authority, and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin, to be subject to his just and gentle rule, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever

Amen

Our Prayers end with the words: *Your kingdom come.* and the response **Your will be done**

Loving God, speak words of grace and words of power to the nations

Speak of justice, compassion, wisdom and peace, that the world may acknowledge you as God over all

Your Kingdom come **Your will be done**

Loving God, speak words of grace and words of power to your church

Speak of faith, endurance, unity and service, that your church may be revived to be, and proclaim, good news to all

Your Kingdom come **Your will be done**

Loving God, speak words of grace and words of power to those who suffer

Speak of comfort, healing, hope and everlasting life that the wounded, weary and worried may know Christ's peace

Your Kingdom come **Your will be done**

Loving God, speak words of grace and words of power to each one of us

Speak of forgiveness, acceptance, life and love that we may rejoice in the Good News that Jesus is Lord

Your Kingdom come **Your will be done**

And so we join our **prayers** together in the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to say:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

Song O Jesus I have promised to serve thee *By John Ernest Bode*

- 1 O Jesus I have promised to serve thee to the end
Be thou forever near me, my master and my friend
I shall not fear the battle is thou art by my side
Nor wander from the pathway if thou wilt be my guide
2. O Jesus thou hast promised to all who follow thee
That where thou art in glory, there shall thy servant be
And Jesus I have promised to serve thee to the end
O give me grace to follow my master and my friend
3. O let me see thy footmarks and in them plant my own
My hope to follow duly is in thy strength alone
O guide me, call me, draw me, uphold me to the end
And then I heaven receive me, my saviour and my friend

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May he turn his face toward you and give you peace

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you , your loved ones, and all those for whom you pray, this day and for evermore **Amen.**

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