

Sunday 15 December 2024 HC 3 - Advent 3

Hymn: TIS 224(i). All hail the power of Jesus' name

All hail the power of Jesus' name; let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem to crown him Lord of all.
Crown him, crown him, crown him Lord of all

Crown him, you martyrs of our God, who from his altar call;
praise him whose way of pain you trod, and crown him Lord of all. *Chorus*
Crown him, crown him, crown him Lord of all

As heirs of Israel's chosen race and ransomed from the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace, and crown him Lord of all. *Chorus*
Crown him, crown him, crown him Lord of all

Sinners, whose love cannot forget the wormwood and the gall,
go spread your treasures at his feet and crown him Lord of all.
Crown him, crown him, crown him Lord of all

Let every tribe and every tongue responsive to his call,
now shout in universal song and crown him Lord of all
Crown him, crown him, crown him Lord of all

Sentence of Scripture

John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Luke 3:16

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you have made us and all things to serve you: come quickly to save us, so that wars and violence shall end and your children may live in peace, honouring one another with justice and love; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Zephaniah 3:14-17

¹⁴ Sing, Daughter Zion; shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem! ¹⁵ The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm.

¹⁶ On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. ¹⁷ The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Psalm: Is 12:2-6

² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.

The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. ”

³ **With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.**

⁴ In that day you will say: “Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name;

make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.

⁵ **Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world.**

⁶ **Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you**

Philippians 4.4-7

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The

Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition,

with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all

understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

Luke 3.7-18

⁷ John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰ “What should we do then?” the crowd asked.

¹¹ John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.”

¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?”

¹³ “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.

¹⁴ Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?”

He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely —be content with your pay.”

¹⁵ The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

¹⁸ And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them

This is the gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Sermon - Luke 3.7-18 - What did Jesus come to do?

Question Time

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven and is

seated at the right hand of the Father; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the world and the church

Response: O God teach us to love you and, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

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 for ever. Amen.

Scripture Sentence

26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 1 Corinthians 11:26-28

The Confession

Knowing the goodness of God and our failure to respond with love and obedience, let us confess our sins, saying together:

Heavenly Father, you have loved us with an everlasting love, but we have broken your holy laws and have left undone what we ought to have done.

We are sorry for our sins and turn away from them.

For the sake of your Son who died for us, forgive us, cleanse us and change us.

By your Holy Spirit, enable us to live for you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God is slow to anger and full of compassion, forgiving all who humbly repent and trust in his Son as Saviour and Lord. God therefore forgives you in Christ Jesus, in whom there is no condemnation

Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn - TIS 518 For the bread and for the wine

**For the bread and for the wine, For the pledge that seals Him mine,
For the words of love divine, We give Thee thanks, O Lord.**

**For the feast of love and peace, bidding all our sorrows cease,
foretaste of the kingdom's bliss we give you thanks, O Lord**

**This the bread and this the wine, Yet to faith, the solemn sign
Of the heavenly and divine! We give Thee thanks, O Lord.**

**Till He comes we take the bread, Type of Him on whom we feed,
Him who lives and once was dead! We give Thee thanks, O Lord.**

**Till He come we take the cup; As we at His table sup,
Eye and heart are lifted up! We give Thee thanks, O Lord.**

**For that coming, here foreshown, For that day to man unknown,
For the glory and the throne, We give Thee thanks, O Lord.**

Thanksgiving for Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever.

The Great Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things,

making us in your own image. We praise you for your son, our saviour Jesus Christ, who by his death on the cross and rising to new life offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people. Therefore, we lift our voices to praise you, saying,

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

And now, gracious God, we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine, and pray that we who receive them in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit according to our Saviour's word, in remembrance of his suffering and death, may share his body and his blood.

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread, and when he had given you thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying 'Take and eat. This is my body which is given for you.'

We who are many are one body in Christ,

for we all share in the one bread.

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying 'Drink from this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

We eat this bread and drink this cup **to proclaim the death of the Lord.**

We do this until he returns. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

Father, as we recall his saving death and glorious resurrection, may we who share these gifts be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and united in the body of your Son. Bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom, there to feast at your table and join in your eternal praise.

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever. Amen

The Holy Communion

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died

for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

After Communion

Gracious God, thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the body and blood of our saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you for assuring us of your goodness and love, and that we are living members of Christ's body.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Notices

Hymn - TIS 547 - Be thou my vision

Chorus

The king of glory comes The nation rejoices
Open the gates before Him Lift up your voices

Who is the king of glory How shall we call Him?
He is Emmanuel The promised of ages *Chorus*

In all of Galilee In city or village
He goes among his people Curing their illness *Chorus*

Sing, then of David's son, Our saviour and brother
In all of Galilee was never another *Chorus*

He gave His life for us, The pledge of salvation
He took upon Himself The sins of the nation *Chorus*

He conquered sin and death, He truly has risen
But, He will share with us His heavenly vision

Chorus 2

The king of glory comes The nation rejoices
Open the gates before Him Lift up your voices, Lift up your voices

Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Sermon - What did Jesus come to do?

Last week we looked at John the Baptist. We didn't actually find out much about him, because he really only came to prepare the way for Jesus. As I mentioned last week, in the scheme of the kingdom of God, John was nothing, but Jesus is everything. Since this is the case, the important thing is that we look at what John said about Jesus, not at what we might glean about John.

So what did John say about Jesus?

As you know, John was baptising people with water in the river Jordan. It was not like the infant baptisms that are usual in this church, where babies have water sprinkled on them from the font at the front or the back of the church. We expect that John was fully immersing adults in the river Jordan, so it probably wasn't in the middle of winter, although some may have been. It was interesting that John was baptising both Jews and non-Jews. People who were born of Jewish parents normally were not baptised - boys were circumcised when they were 8 days old, and girls and boys were formally welcomed into the Jewish community via a Bar Mitzvah for boys or a Bat Mitzvah for girls, and they took their formal place in the temple or the local synagogue, just as they do today. If a proselyte, or foreigner wanted to become Jewish, they would also be circumcised (if male), but also have to undergo baptism, a symbolic washing to show that their sins were washed away. So it was strange that John was baptising Jews as well as non-Jews.

However, John said Jesus would do something completely different. John said Jesus would not baptise with water, but with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

As we heard this morning, John was helping people get ready for what he called the coming wrath. The Jews knew that the way they were living was not up to God's standard. At the beginning of the Old Testament, God gave the Jews a basic set of rules for them to follow. There are 613 commands in the Old Testament, but to simplify things, these rules were summarised in the 10 Commandments. The problem was that no one kept even these 10 commandments, and God wasn't happy. For hundreds of years, God's prophets had been prophesying that God would get fed up with his people ignoring and disobeying his commandments, and would basically turn things around. Essentially they were expecting a Messiah to come to judge the world and destroy everyone who disobeyed God. As John put it: The ax is already at the

root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

Not surprisingly, those who trusted the prophets wanted to avoid this judgment, and were asking John what to do. John's response was that they had to get rid of their sin, to wash it completely out of their lives, which was what baptism symbolised. By baptising both Jews and Gentiles, John was saying that no one met God's standard, and everyone needed to be washed clean.

However, what was scarier was that John said that Jesus was the Messiah who was coming, and that he wouldn't just wash people's sins away with water, he would burn their sins away with the Holy Spirit and with fire. You and I know that if you want something really clean, then washing with water isn't enough. If you have some form of surgery in a hospital, you want to know that the scalpels and other instruments have been sterilised with heat, not just washed in water. The problem is heat hurts a lot more than just water, at least if you are a person, not a scalpel.

John was saying that if his hearers didn't clean up their lives properly, then their lives would be cleaned up for them, and it would not be enjoyable. And he was saying that Jesus was the Messiah who was coming to clean things up.

Now, I know that you might be thinking that this doesn't seem to be a particularly cheerful subject to talk about during the Christmas season. Isn't Christmas supposed to be the season of goodwill and joy; peace to all mankind? How can we be talking about fiery judgement and sin?

John knew that no matter how things might be in the short term, that sooner or later judgement would come, and it would not be a time of goodwill and joy unless things were cleaned up first. But what John didn't know was how Jesus, as the expected Messiah, would do that cleaning up. John expected that Jesus would clean up people who didn't meet God's standard with fire and judgement. That's not surprising - if I break the law, then I expect to pay the penalty, I expect to pay the fine, I expect to lose my driving license, or if it is really serious, I expect to spend time in jail. What John didn't know or expect was that God had another solution in mind. While the penalty had to be paid, God planned that Jesus, his own son, the Messiah, would take the penalty upon himself.

God had always planned to come into this world himself as the perfect human Jesus Christ, to take the penalty for all of mankind's sin on himself, and to die on the cross in our place. God had planned this all along, and we heard it prophesied in our Old Testament reading this morning. Zephaniah said to us: Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem! ¹⁵ The LORD has taken away your punishment, ¹⁷ The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."

Even in our psalm this morning we read² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.

John knew that God would be our salvation, but he didn't know that he would come to die in our place to become our salvation, but this is what Jesus came to do.

And this is why Christmas is the season of joy and good will. This is why Paul says to us in our Phillipians reading: ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Jesus Christ, God the Son, came to earth as the perfect human, to take the penalty we deserve, so our hearts and your minds are guarded from the judgement we deserve, are guarded in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit, that at this Christmas season, we can say with Paul and everyone else who puts their faith in Christ Jesus: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Do you rejoice this Christmas because Christ came to save us from the judgement we deserve, and saved us for the eternal life that only he can give?