

Matthew depicts the Pharisees and Sadducees as presenting a united front of opposition against Jesus.

7. Closing Prayer

God, sometimes this world is hard to understand, and even when we trust you, our hearts still ache.

So we come to you, asking for the hope we need.

Hope that sees past the here-and-now,
Hope that believes what we cannot yet glimpse,
Hope that holds our hearts up
when life brings us to our knees.

You are the only one who can sustain us.

Be the rescuer of our souls
the deliverer of our dreams,
the holder of our hearts

We believe that even the darkest night
must lead to dawn.

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Meaning of the Advent Wreath:

- The 1st **purple** candle is lit on the 1st Sunday in Advent, Nov 27th, and is the candle of HOPE.
- The 2nd **purple** candle is lit on the 2nd Sunday in Advent, Dec 4th, and is the candle of PEACE.
- The 3rd **pink** candle is lit on the 3rd Sunday in Advent, Dec 11th, also known as Gaudete Sunday, and is the candle of JOY.
- The 4th **purple** candle is lit on the 4th Sunday in Advent, Dec 18th, and is the candle of LOVE.
- The central white candle is lit on Christmas Day as the light of Christ enters the world when Jesus is born.
- The wreath is **evergreen** symbolising everlasting life, and in the shape of a circle because a circle has no beginning and no end. It goes on forever, just like God's love for us.



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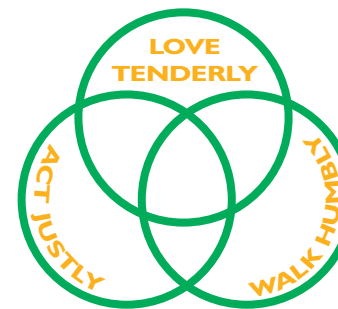
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Making Space for Trust
Third Sunday of Advent 2016



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1. Welcome and Opening Prayer

Our world waits in darkness
longing for your light.

In the midst of darkness
brighten our hopes.

As we long for lasting peace
in the midst of war
Be with us.

As we long for families to be reunited,
Be with us

As we long for enemies to be reconciled
Be with us

As we long for cures and healings,
Be with us.

As we long for decent jobs and security,
Be with us.

As we long for love and community
Be with us

Fulfil the deepest longings
of your people and
dispel the darkness in our hearts
and the world.

Give us the hope we need
to bring to life your love and justice.
Amen

2. Gospel text: Matthew 11:2-11

When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him: ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’

Jesus replied, ‘Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the

dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the person who takes no offence at me.’ As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John. ‘What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written:

“I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.”

I tell the truth: among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.’

3. Quiet Moment

People can read over the text for themselves and pick out words or short phrases that strike them and say them out loud. When everyone has had a chance to say their word/phrase, they can then reflect silently for a moment or two and then briefly say why such a word/phrase struck them – in relation to themselves or their community or the world.

4. Questions

Reflection questions for Matthew 11: 2-11

1. Around Jesus life flourished, people felt hope. What gives you joy as a christian?
2. What piece of music or work of art lifts your spirit?
3. From whom do you receive healing?

5. Prayers

Mentioning the people and situations we want to pray for.

6. Background notes for Matthew 11:2-11

Jesus has been moving among his own people in Galilee and the surrounding countryside telling them the good news of God’s tremendous love and hope for the future. He has communicated it through telling stories (parables) and through healing people in the community who were not regarded as worthy of God’s attention. He has been talking with everyone who came to him and has chosen to be in the company of despised tax collectors and prostitutes. The only condition he has requested from people is to have faith in him. Life is thriving and flourishing around him.

John the Baptist is languishing in prison searching for a glimmer of hope. But Jesus’ lifestyle upsets John. He is confused by the humble, healing approach of Jesus. In his reply to John, Jesus points him in another direction: people have been cured, they are walking again, talking again, seeing, hearing; learning to hope again. Jesus blesses and heals – he does not resort to violence. The signs of God’s presence are of life no longer stunted, of life blooming again, relief, freedom, peace of mind, sadness lifted. This presence is as reliable as the new growth of spring coming back each year.

By the time Matthew was writing, the Jewish leaders had rejected Jesus and so in addressing Christians who had been Jews