

So it is with the Kingdom. It is on its way, it is "near", (v. 8) but will come in its own time. Our impatience will not hasten its coming, but we can expect it with the confidence of faith.

#### Matthew 11:2-11

John the Baptist has been arrested and imprisoned. Discouraged and in doubt, he sends messengers to ask Jesus: "Are you the one ...?" (v. 3) But Jesus does not simply say yes. Instead, he points John (and the crowd) to the signs of the Kingdom (v. 5). Echoing Isaiah, he points out that the blind, the deaf, the lame and the lepers are being healed and good news is given to the poor. Anyone can claim to be a herald of the kingdom, but only in the presence of the Messiah will the true signs of the Kingdom be evident. These are not mere claims, he maintains, but incontrovertible proof. Yet apparently there are some who take offense at Jesus (v. 6). Perhaps even John himself has been disappointed because his expectations of the Messiah do not seem to be fulfilled by Jesus, e.g. he does not "wear soft robes" (v. 8). Perhaps this has given rise to doubts. Jesus refers to the signs of the Kingdom in Isaiah. John is "more than a prophet" (v. 9) for he heralds the dawn of the final era of history and announces the coming of the Kingdom. Now Jesus validates John's ministry as a true prophet (by quoting a prophecy from Malachi, v. 10), going on even to identify John as Elijah, returned (v. 14). (Jews understood the time of the prophets to have ended, but took Malachi's words to mean that Elijah would come again.) Jesus criticizes the people who went out to see John the Baptist in the wilderness with a variety of incorrect expectations. What they actually saw was greater than they could have imagined. Yet even John, as great as he was, only pointed the way to an even greater reality (v. 11). Up to and including John the Baptist was the time of prophetic promise; now this promise is starting to be fulfilled (v. 13). When we are disappointed, or our expectations of God's Kingdom are dashed, perhaps it is because we are not looking for the signs of the Kingdom that are all around us. © 1996-2019 Chris Haslam

#### ~ Notices ~

**Ukraine Appeal** [clareanglicans.ie](http://clareanglicans.ie) or: [www.christianaid.ie](http://www.christianaid.ie)

**Living the Questions Course** – restarts in the New Year

**Book Club** 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of every month – ask Sue for details

#### Concerts booked

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December 6.00pm

Coole Music School Harmony Choir - Ste Lucia Concert.

#### Christmas Services

Christmas Eve 4.00pm Christingle – Kilfenora Cathedral  
8.00pm Eucharist – Kilnasoolagh Church  
Christmas Day 9.30am Spanish Point  
11.30am St Columba's, Ennis

**Website:** [clareanglicans.ie](http://clareanglicans.ie)

**YouTube:** [www.youtube.com/clareanglicans](http://www.youtube.com/clareanglicans)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/clare.anglicans](http://www.facebook.com/clare.anglicans)

**Rector:** Email: [frkevinobrien@me.com](mailto:frkevinobrien@me.com)

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#### Mission Sunday

Donations for Protestant Aid and St Vincent de Paul to:  
Limerick & Killaloe Diocesan Council for Mission  
Bank of Ireland, University Branch, Castletroy, Limerick  
IBAN: IE44BOFI90459591214337 BIC: BOFIE2D



## 3rd Sunday of Advent 2022 (A) Gaudete Sunday

### Readings and Hymns

#### Collect

God for whom we watch and wait,  
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your  
Son: give us courage to speak the truth, to hunger for  
justice, and to suffer for the cause of right, with Jesus  
Christ our Lord. **Amen**

#### Hymns

**Hymn 1:** 146. A great and mighty wonder

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MT0XUy0nChA>

**Hymn 2:** 136. On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plr21lGfPg>

**Hymn 3:** 712. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the

Lord, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vz-FkqobgXY>

#### Isaiah 35: 1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.  
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the majesty of our God.  
Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.  
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.  
He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.  
He will come and save you.'  
Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.  
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;  
the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,\*  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.  
A highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not travel on it,\*  
but it shall be for God's people;\*  
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.  
No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,  
but the redeemed shall walk there.  
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

#### Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,\*  
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his  
servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations

will call me blessed; \*  
 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
 and holy is his name.  
 His mercy is for those who fear him \*  
 from generation to generation.  
 He has shown strength with his arm; \*  
 he has scattered the proud  
 in the thoughts of their hearts.  
 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,\*  
 and lifted up the lowly;  
 he has filled the hungry with good things, \*  
 and sent the rich away empty.  
 He has helped his servant Israel, \*  
 in remembrance of his mercy,  
 according to the promise he made to our ancestors, \*  
 to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

**James 5: 7-10**

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

**Matthew 11: 2-11**

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.' As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone\* dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then 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, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

**Post Communion Prayer**

Father, we give you thanks for these heavenly gifts. Kindle us with the fire of your Spirit that when Christ comes again we may shine as lights before his face; who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

**Commentary**

**Isaiah 35:1-10**

In this oracle of restoration, the prophet promises: restoration of the land to fertility, the end of human suffering and infirmity, restoration of hope and justice, and the joyful return of the exiles from captivity. The prophet has predicted the destruction of the nations, particularly of Edom, and the devastation of their lands. (Edom was thought to have aided the Babylonians in capturing Jerusalem.) The other lands will be laid waste, rendered unproductive and given over to wild beasts (in Chapter 34). Now, in contrast, exiled Israel will be restored. The "desert shall ... blossom" (v. 1), the fertility of "Lebanon" (v. 2),

"Carmel and Sharon", which has been taken from them (33:9) will be given to Israel as a sign of God's favour and glory. (The Plain of Sharon, extending from the Mediterranean coast to the Carmel range of mountains, was then covered with dense oak forest, as was much of Lebanon.) The land which had once been given over to wild beasts ("jackals", v. 7, "lion", v. 9) will once again be cultivated, and barren land will bloom. Not only the land will be restored, but human life will also be transformed, with the end of infirmity ("make firm ... feeble knees", v. 3, "blind", "deaf", "lame", "speechless" vv. 4-6), and with the restoration of justice ("vengeance" and "recompense" v. 4) and hope. "Waters" (v. 6) and "streams" will make the land fertile again. (The little evidence we have indicates that the exiles did not suffer in exile, so vv. 4-6 are not meant literally.) Finally, the exiles, those taken captive to Babylon, will return on a "Holy Way" (v. 8), a "highway" in safety (v. 9) to "Zion" (v. 10), the holy city, and once again will worship God in the Temple. All of these will be signs that God's rule is restored and that his favour rests on his people.

**Luke 1:46b-55**

Mary is visiting Elizabeth and Zechariah. God's messenger, Gabriel, has told her that she will bear Jesus, "the Son of God" (v. 35), successor to David and founder of an eternal kingdom. With God, "nothing will be impossible" (v. 37) – it was possible for Sarah to bear a child. Mary now thanks God in a poem known as the Magnificat, the first word of its Latin translation. Speaking today, she might begin: From the depth of my heart, I declare the Lord's greatness and rejoice in God my Saviour. "Servant" (v. 48) can also be rendered slave or handmaid: in v. 38, she has acknowledged that she is a "servant of the Lord", i.e. obedient to him in all things. She will be hailed by people of every age ("generations", v. 48) in the new era of salvation launched by her son. Why? Because of the seemingly impossible "things" (v. 49) God has done for her. Then a reminder (v. 50): God is compassionate to all who hold him in awe throughout time. Vv. 51-53 universalize her experience, to reflect how God deals with all humanity. While the verbs are in the past tense in English, the Greek tense has the sense of: how God customarily acts – as he always has and will continue to do – and what he is starting to do in the conception of Jesus. The "proud" (v. 51), the arrogant, are alienated from God by their very "thoughts"; he reverses fortunes, raising up those in need ("lowly", v. 52, "hungry", v. 53) and rejecting the rich, those who think they don't need God. Vv. 54-55 sum up the Magnificat: in his compassion, God has fulfilled and continues to fulfill his promises to the patriarchs.

**James 5:7-10**

Early Christians expected the return of Jesus, the second coming, almost immediately. This was connected with expectations about the Kingdom of God. The apparent delay of this event caused some difficulties and even some disputes among the faithful. James warns his readers not to be impatient (vv. 8-9), lest this impatience lead to grumbling and division within the church (v. 9), which will bring judgement. For with the second coming of Christ comes also the judgement of God. The second coming is a two-edged sword: its arrival is both of comfort and of warning to Christians! Instead, James tells his readers that they are to be patient in suffering like the prophets (v. 10). They are to bide their time like the farmer who plants his crop in the knowledge that the rains will come in their own time (v. 7). (In Palestine, there are two rainy times of the year: October-November, "early" and April-May, "late".)