

Sunday 13th of December 2020

Sermon by Kemi Ogundipe. Prayers by Julian Providence

John Chapter 1 verses 6-8 and 19-28

Good morning, a warm welcome to our online third Sunday in advent service, our preparation for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ. I am Kemi.

We will begin the service with a short prayer, Julian will lead the prayer of intercession, I will read the bible passage titled "A witness to the Light" and will preach and then conclude with a blessing.

Let us pray

Almighty God, this season of advent remind us again that during our darkness you are bringing us hope, peace, love to calm our anxious Spirit and hectic lives. Turn our hearts towards you, make us to receive your son our saviour slows our pace and give us the blessing of feeling your peace in our Spirits, lead us in our worship and let it be a fragrant offering to you, this we ask in Jesus's name Amen.

Julian will lead us in prayer

Prayers

Father as we meet here again this Sunday morning, we thank you for bringing us through another week. Thank you that you have faithfully watched over all of us - that you have been near to us in the difficult times of the week we are also thankful for the good things you have brought into our lives, however small - even shelter and food to eat.

Thank you Lord Jesus for the great gift of knowing you as we come into the season of remembering your light breaking into the darkness of this world. Thank you for the joy and peace of knowing that not only are you here with us now but you have gone ahead of us to prepare our home with you for eternity. Help us Holy Spirit to stay close to the Lord keep in step with him as we walk through this life.

We think of those have not yet come to know of your love and saving grace. We pray for our Alpha course online starting next month. Help us to prepare well Holy Spirit and honour the name of the Lord. We thank you for the opportunity to work with our new family at Holy Trinity. Just take a moment allow the Lord to bring to mind anyone you might invite or offer a prayer for someone who has yet to meet the Lord...

We pray for our merger with Holy Trinity. Please Lord will you keep watch over this process. We trust you that the process will happen under your guidance and in your perfect timing. We pray that your Spirit of wisdom will be on both PCC's and that they will remain open to your leading. We pray for our new church leader who you have already chosen, that you will be preparing them to join us.

We pray for the needs of our family:

For Audrey - please look after her heart and please will you find her a date for surgery soon. We pray for continued rehabilitation of her hip and give her your strength Lord.

For Tony who audits our accounts. We pray he would know of your loving presence following the death of his wife.

We pray for Yvette's son Zak, that you would watch over him and bring him back to health.

For Val that you would continue to help her exercise and improve mobility and that you would safeguard her health also.

For Alison's sister-in-law that she would get the right treatment at the right time and for Alison sister that you would lay your healing hands on her mind. We pray for you to sustain Alison and help her find places of rest.

We ask for your presence to continue to be with us all, whatever our needs or joys are especially as many of us struggle with the huge disruption to life, particularly in this Christmas season when we are unable to meet family and friends as we would wish or gather as a church with our community. As you have promised you will watch over our coming and going, both now and forevermore (Psalm 121:8) and you are faithful in all your promises.

We continue to lift your loving outreach into our community.

We remember Amaze Penge and pray for Cherry that you would enable her to continue caring for those families of children with special needs and help her to reflect the love that you have for those families.

We continue to pray for CAP and for Lin, Rachael and Gareth. Please help them to remain effective through offering telephone support rather than in-person meetings. Help them to draw strength from you in this emotionally draining and stressful work. Bind them together as a team and give them your wisdom and guidance and leadership as they plan for the coming year. We lift to you also the needs brought to us in this month's prayer requests.

We thank you for how you have sustained us as a church, not only during the pandemic but before that also, both financially and through administration behind the scenes and through contributions to services. We thank you for all those who continue to serve and sustain St John's. Lord would you continue to inspire and sustain them. Lord we declare we continue to rely on you as our provider and sustainer.

We lift the need for a replacement boiler to you thanking you for all the donations already made and we ask that you will continue to provide.

Finally, we pray for our world. We remember the many conflict zones around the world - in particular Yemen where millions face hunger. Lord we ask that governments do not forget the responsibilities you give to those who are provided for - that we share with those in need. By the power of your Spirit please bring this conflict to an end and we remember the latest conflict to start, in Ethiopia. We ask for you to bring this to a quick end before more harm is done.

Lord please would you be with the UK now we are entering the possibility of a no-deal Brexit. Lord we pray that whatever happens you will use these coming months and years for your plans and purposes for our nation to be fulfilled.

We end with the prayer Jesus taught us...

Our Father in heaven

Hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come

Your will be done earth as in heaven Give us today our daily bread

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

For the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory are yours now and forever.

Amen.

Reading

The reading is from the book of John Chapter 1 verses 6-8 and 19-28

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

John the Baptist Denies Being the Christ

Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but he confessed freely, "I am not the Christ. They asked him;" Then who are you? Are you Elijah? He said" I am not" Are you the Prophet? He answered "No" Finally they said who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself? John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, I am the voice of the one calling in the desert," Make straight the way for the Lord". Now pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptise if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet? I baptise with water, John replied, but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

This is the word of the Lord - **thanks be to God.**

Talk

In the beginning, when the world was new, there was dark and light, light was diligent and hardworking, while dark was lazy and greedily jealous of light's beauty and grace. Both entities wanted to rule over the world and so they constantly battled ceaselessly with one another, having the upper hand at one second and the other gaining the advantage the next. Thank God for the beautiful world he created and all the beautiful things in it, I am

going to talk about the light we are a reflection of it through the grace of God, the light was sent to give rebirth to God's people, and through his death and resurrection we have been saved. Today's talk is a continuation of last week by Laura "John the Baptist prepares the way of the Lord, make straight paths for him"

How do we continue to reflect this light John the Baptist witnessed?

In the book of John, the name John refers to John the Baptist. He was unique and preached a usual message to Judeans who went out to wastelands to see him, he did not aim at uniqueness for its own sake, instead he aimed at obedience. God is pleased to speak to us by men like ourselves; he was a messenger, who was prophesied in Malachi chapter 3:1 "See I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me, then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple the messenger of the covenant whom you desire will come says the Lord almighty".

Verses 7 and 8 tell us that John was a witness, he came to testify. The legal institutions had been long a testimony for God in the Jewish Church. By them revealed religion was kept up, the tabernacle of testimony, the ark of the testimony, but now divine revelation is to be turned into another channel, now the testimony of Christ is the testimony of God among the gentiles, God indeed had not left himself without witness *Acts chapter 14:16-17* "In the past, he let all nations go their own way, yet he has not let himself without testimony, he has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons, he provides you with plenty of food and fills your heart with joy" The matter of this testimony, he came to bear the light, light is a thing which witness for itself and carries its own evidence along with it.

Christ's light needs not man's testimony, but the world's darkness does, John was like the watchman that goes round the town proclaiming the approach of the morning light to those that have closed their eyes and are not willing themselves to observe it or like that watchman that was set to tell those who asked him what time of the night that morning comes and to tell those who are asleep, not expecting a Messiah. He was sent of God to tell the world that the long looked for Messiah was now come who should be a light to the gentiles and glory of his people Israel, and to proclaim that dispensation at hand which would bring life and immortality to light, his testimony was designed that all men might believe not in him, but in Christ, whose way he was sent to prepare. We are cautioned not to mistake John for the light; he only came to bear witness to that great and ruling light. John was serviceable as a witness to the light.

We have the testimony of John which he delivered to the messengers who were sent from Jerusalem to examine him, we see here who they were that sent him. They that sent to him were the Jews at Jerusalem, the high court which sat at Jerusalem and was representative of the Jewish church, and they that sent were priest and Levites, probably members of the council, men of learning, gravity and authority. John the Baptist was himself a priest of the seed of Aaron and therefore it was not fit that he should be examined by any priests. Malachi prophesied concerning John's ministry that it should purify the sons of Levi,

Malachi chapter 3:3 and therefore they were jealous of him and his reformation; they were of the pharisees, proud, self-justified, who thought they needed no repentance and therefore could not bear one who made it his business to preach repentance; they were sent on this errand to enquire concerning John and his baptism to satisfy their curiosity, just as the Athenians would later enquire concerning Paul's doctrine because of its novelty in Acts chapter 17.

The men sent to John showed their authority, and they thought they looked great when they called him to account whom all men counted as a prophet and arraigned him at their bar, It was with a design to suppress him and silence him if they could find any support for it, for they were jealous of the growing interest in him, and his ministry agreed neither with the mosaic dispensation the expectation which they had formed of the Messiah's Kingdom, but the answer John gave them concerning him and concerning his baptism?, well, both witnessed to Christ. John disowns himself to be Christ.

Verse 20 He clearly said, I am not the Christ, who was now expected and waited for, I am the voice, vehicle by which God is pleased of communicate his mind, he openly and solemnly without any puzzle confessed, I am not the Christ, his disowning himself to be the Christ is called his confessing and not denying. For us, at our calling to serve as ministers or whatever our calling could be including myself, we are never to call ourselves Christ, we are not Christ and therefore must not take over his powers and authority nor assume the praises due to him we are not Christ and must not Lord it over God's heritage nor pretend to a dominion over the faith of Christians and not set for masters.

By Verse 21 the Jews, hearing of John's character and doctrine, and observing that he appeared as one who came from the same part of the country from which Elijah was carried to heaven, they were ready to take him for Elijah but he disown this too, John had been prophesied under the name of Elijah another prophecy of Malachi that he fulfilled in

Malachi chapter 4:5 and he came in the Spirit and power of Elias Luke chapter 1:17 and was Elias that was to come Matthew chapter 11:14, He gives an account of himself as a voice Isaiah chapter 40:3 an articulate voice to instruct those people who are prepared to receive the law, calling people to repentance, he cried aloud and did not spare. That which he cried was 'to make straight the way of the Lord' to rectify the mistakes of people concerning the ways of God, it is certain that they were previously right ways but the scribes and pharisees with their corrupt glosses upon the law had made them crooked. Now John the Baptist calls people to return to the original rule. He came to prepare people for the reception and entertainment of Christ and his gospel. John owned himself to be only minister of outward sign. "I baptize with water and that is all, I am no more and do no more than what you see. I have no other title than John the Baptist. I cannot confer the Spiritual grace signified by it." Paul was careful that none should think of him above what they saw him to be and so was John Baptist. John directed them to one who was greater than himself "whose shoe lace I am not worthy to loose, John Baptist demonstrated here for us to see the way we are supposed to continue to reflect God's light as his chosen people at our calling, our call together.

Let us not call ourselves what we are not, we are to be like John the Baptist. We are not the source of the light we merely reflect that light. Jesus Christ is the true light. He helps us see our way to God and shows us how to walk along that way.

May God help us to reflect his true light as our calling. Amen.

We now conclude our service with a blessing

We are looking for God in our world,
may we see what God wants us to see,
may we be who God wants to be
and may God our Shepherd, protector, awakener, and Holy Spirit,
bless us through these advent days. **Amen.**