



Hope and Expectation

Study Two



Synopsis of Saint John the Baptist, 11C (Menologion of Basil II)

Opening Psalm : Amen and Amen

(Read Psalm 72:1-7,18-19)



*'May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth' (v. 6)*

This psalm opens with hope and expectation that the king might be powerfully blessed by God. The writer looks to a reign that defends the poor, upholds justice, and defeats oppressors. He hopes this wise monarch will remain a blessing for a long time, but in saying so may also be thinking about the length of the royal dynasty rather than an individual life.

Read today, these words reach beyond earthly monarchs and point us toward the coming Messiah.

This season of Advent is one of expectation, celebrating Christ's first coming as a child in Bethlehem, but also looking forward to the day He will come again. The psalm presents a

picture of abundance, with righteousness blossoming and peace enduring, and in our expectation, we are challenged not to sit quietly and wait but to live boldly and faithfully, speaking out for justice and peace, supporting the needy, and sharing God's love.

The psalm ends with a doxology, a short hymn of praise to the Lord who has done, and will continue to do, 'marvellous deeds' on behalf of his people, demonstrating his 'glorious name' to all the world. Then follows a double 'Amen' emphasising the truth of these words.

In that day

(Read Isaiah 11:1-10)



*'for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.'* (v. 9b)

In the previous chapter God's judgement had fallen on the Assyrians, and now, from the remnant of Israel's faithful people, there will come a shoot 'from the stump of Jesse', representing all that remained of the Davidic dynasty. It is a vision of hope springing from an unlikely source. What looked dead and finished shall become the source of new life.

For Israel, weary from exile and disappointment, this was a promise that God had not abandoned them. From a remnant, God would raise up a ruler filled with wisdom, justice, and the Spirit's power.

In Advent we hear this passage with Christ in view - the branch from Jesse's line who came in humility at Bethlehem. Jesus embodies the hope that Isaiah describes, defending the poor, bringing peace, and reconciling enemies. The wolf lying with the lamb and a little child leading them paints a world where violence, fear, and division shall be overcome.

In a world filled with conflict, this might seem almost unobtainable, but it is still a hope that can sustain us today, as in places of despair and brokenness God brings renewal and new shoots of life, if not through rulers, then in the lives of ordinary people standing up against injustice and sharing God's message of peace and love.



Victor of Crete (iconographer) Tree of Jesse c1674

Preparing the way

(Read Matthew 3:1-12)



*'A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'* (v. 3b)

In the region of the lower Jordan River valley, John the Baptist cries out, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' Echoing Isaiah's words, John tells those gathering to hear him that they must prepare for something radically new, and calls for a baptism of

repentance - not as an end in itself, but as a preparation for Jesus Christ, the One who will come with the Holy Spirit, fire, and renewal.

His words may seem severe, cutting away what is lifeless to make room

for fresh growth, yet beneath this warning is a deep hope and expectation of something new: a promise that after so many centuries of apparent silence, God is once more drawing near

Advent teaches us to hold together both expectation and repentance. To repent is to turn around, to reorient our lives so we can welcome Christ's transforming presence. To expect is to live with trust that God's kingdom is near, even when wilderness surrounds us.

Like Israel waiting for the promised Messiah, we wait in hope that the Spirit will bring new life where we least expect.

The wilderness is not the end. From dry ground, a green shoot rises.



A prayer

Gracious God, in this season of waiting,
we open our hearts to your promise.
Prepare us by your Spirit
to welcome Christ with joy and with courage.
Where our lives feel like stumps,
bring forth new shoots of hope.
Turn us from all that hinders your life within us,
and keep us watchful for the coming of your kingdom.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.