

POCKLINGTON GROUP OF CHURCHES

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THE BULLETIN - READINGS

Sunday 10 December, Advent 2

Collect for Advent 2

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us,
and with great might succour us;
that whereas, through our sins and wickedness
we are grievously hindered
in running the race that is set before us,
your bountiful grace and mercy
may speedily help and deliver us;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit,
be honour and glory, now and for ever.

Isaiah 61:1-4,8-end: The Good News of Deliverance

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion -
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,

the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

For I the LORD love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

John 1.6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

The Testimony of John the Baptist

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord" ', as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Readings for 17 December, Advent 3, are:

Isaiah 61:1-4,8-end; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1.6-8, 19-28

Bearing the light of faith *by Rodney Nicholson*

At this time of the year I tend to be invited to one or two primary schools to talk about The Children's Society - in preparation for their Christingle service. I was in Naburn the week before last and am about to visit Middleton-on-the-Wolds. Two weeks ago I was at Goldsborough, near Knaresborough, which is outside my area, but it did provide an opportunity to see an old friend. Ken (89), a retired Methodist minister, and I used to go on

mountaineering holidays in Scotland in my single days. Understandably he can only manage a short walk now, but we sauntered around part of Fewston reservoir, just off the A59 Skipton road.

I am also asked occasionally to speak about The Children's Society at a Christingle service, as was the case last Sunday at All Saints, Hessle, which holds a Christingle service on Advent Sunday mainly for the uniformed groups. Their active Children's Society team works hard to provide an attractive, well publicised act of worship. Some seventy-five Cubs, Brownies, Beavers and Rainbows turned out, along with leaders and many parents, and it was all very lively and warm-hearted, resulting in £375 for The Children's Society.

I was impressed by the good blend of the new and the old. Like our All Saints – a popular dedication round here – they have a historic building which has seen some welcome alterations. As well as using traditional hymn books, they also have a screen on which to project the order of service and hymns, if wanted, and have cleared away pews at the front of church to create space. They also have a coffee/tea/meeting area at the back, with comfortable chairs arranged in a square - to facilitate a relaxed conversation. As in most churches, there are good clergy and certainly a band of committed lay people keen to offer friendship and hospitality.

Worshipping in other parishes, as well as our own, helps us to appreciate the strength and vitality of the Church. It puts the lie to the notion that the Church is dying on its feet, for many people are showing the light of Christ by their faithful witness. Mission must be central in all we do, and Christmas provides a wonderful opportunity for those who do not worship regularly to taste something of the joy and hope which perhaps we take for granted.