

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 14 December 2025
Advent 3**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. Last week, we met with John the Baptist in the wilderness. Today, as our Advent journey continues, we will be exploring his hope that Jesus is truly the one, God's Messiah. Jesus sends him evidence of his kingship.

Advent 3 is also known as Rejoice Sunday. At church, we will be lighting the pink candle on our Advent wreath. Joy and hope are combined as one as we think of John the Baptist who pointed the way to Jesus.

Every blessing,

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*As you prepare to explore John's hope in Jesus,
and his joy, open your heart to our King.*

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Son of God appear:

Rejoice, rejoice!

*Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel.*

*Great O Antiphons (12th-13th century)
trans. John Mason Neale (1818-1866)*

Artwork

by SunYoung Kim (2025)

inspired by Great O Antiphons

Prayers and Reflections
for use at home on Advent 3
Joy and Hope

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence and feel his love. If you are indoors, you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love - here, in your room. You may also wish to have a bowl of water ready for the time of letting go. When you are ready, say this opening prayer.

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
You know the journeys that I take
and the places where I rest.
You know all that is on my heart,
every one of my worries.
Help me to let go of them,
for a while, as I spend time in your presence.
Amen.

LETTING GO

If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, when you are ready, reflect on your life with the second verse from this week's hymn.

O come, thou rod of Jesse, free
thine own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell thy people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.

Rejoice, rejoice!

*Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel.*

*Great O Antiphons
trans. John Mason Neale (1818-1866)*



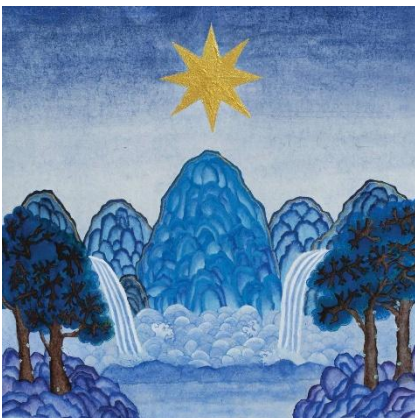
If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.

The next of the Great O Antiphons is inspired by the passage in Isaiah 11 which we looked at briefly in last week's reflections. Jesus will be born into King David's line. His role will be to bring peace to the world's warring areas and peoples and to bring justice to the poor of the earth. What a challenging calling! It is as challenging now as it was when the kings of Judah ignored the needs of the poor and lowly (Isaiah's time) or when the people of God were oppressed by their religious leaders and by the occupying Romans (Jesus' time).



One of the images that Isaiah offers us is of two natural enemies – a wolf and a lamb – living together in peace. As you contemplate this beautiful artwork, ponder who are today's wolves and who are today's lambs. The lambs are yearning for the freedom to live in safety, for justice and peace.

Who would you love to receive these gifts at Christmas? Knowing Jesus holds them on his heart too, pray to him with joy and hope. He is – he will be – Christ our King. Wolves will live alongside the world's lambs; both will trust their neighbours. If not now, it will happen when our Lord returns to rule on earth and judge our hearts and our actions.



*O come, thou dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight:
Rejoice, rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel.*

Great O Antiphons

trans. John Mason Neale (1818-1866)

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Today, this prayer is being said across our villages and the worldwide Church. Add your voice to the earthly circle of prayer to our Faithful One.

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.**

John the Baptist called God's people out into the wilderness to seek God's forgiveness for the way that they had been living their lives. He sent them back home to live by God's two key rules: love God with every fibre of your being and love others as you love yourself. No one is beyond God's love so no one should be beneath our love. All we need to do is to live by this key verse and write it on our hearts.

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them.

Genesis 1:27-28a

Everyone is made in God's image. No one is too poor or too weak to be worthy of his blessing. All are deserving of his love and ours. All will be judged by Christ our King on his return. How have you built up others, helped them to feel worthy of love? How have you failed to do this? Offer this to our King who is the way and the truth and life. He is the key that unlocks our way to salvation.

Ponder this as you contemplate the next artwork and its verse. You may find yourself drawn to the story of Noah and the ark, with the dove that confirmed it was safe to disembark, as land emerged after the floods.



O come, thou key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery:

Rejoice, rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee,

O Israel.

Great O Antiphons

trans. John Mason Neale (1818-1866)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

John asks, 'Are you the one?'

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, '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 cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.'

As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then 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 will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you."

Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Matthew 11:2-11

Joy and hope...

John is in prison. From his cell, he sends a message to Jesus. 'Before I die, confirm that you are the one promised by the prophets.' He is seeking God's hope to lighten the darkness of death. He receives this in abundance. Jesus has been fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah.

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Isaiah 35:5-6a

John's heart will have been filled with joy at this great news! He has been right to herald in Jesus as the Messiah, the new King of David's line promised centuries before. He can die in peace even though his will be a gruesome death. Jesus will weep tears for his cousin.

John's story reminds me of St. Paul who was able to write these words of joyous and encouraging hope from prison.

Rejoice in the Lord always.

I will say it again: rejoice!

The Lord is near.

Philippians 4:4, 5b

Do ponder how your faith in Jesus as your King gives you the strength to face your own dark and difficult times with hope. Are you able to rejoice or – at least – find gentle joy in the knowledge that all will be well for you, if not in this life, then in the life beyond this life?



O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times didst give the Law,
in cloud and majesty and awe:
Rejoice, rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel.

Great O Antiphons

trans. John Mason Neale (1818-1866)

OUR PRAYERS

Feel free to use one or more of these prayers and to add your own.

Lord Jesus, you were the light of hope in the darkness of John's prison. He trusted in your promise of a place in your kingdom. Your promise fills my heart with joy and hope. All will be well with you as my King...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you came to bring justice to the poor of the earth, to remind the powerful and rich that all are made in God's image, all are worthy of love. Lord, when leaders forget this, remind them...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you saw the suffering in the ordinary towns and villages, and you transformed their lives with your love. You healed those who were barred from entering the temple. All are welcome in your house...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

O God, you search me and you know me,
all my thoughts and feelings are open to your gaze,
you see the paths I will take before I take them. Guide my daily living.
Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**