



Together

only physically apart

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

A waiting and watching time

Revd Nathan Falla

We are without doubt in a waiting and watching time! Yes we are in the season of Advent; a season of preparation to prepare our hearts and our lives for the celebration of Christmas (as different as it may be this year), but we are also waiting and watching to see what may happen as a result of the pandemic. The beginning of the roll out of the vaccination is seeing hopes beginning to rise about what the future will bring, but there is still much uncertainty.

Spending time in preparation is really important; whether you are someone who writes meticulous lists and plans everything or whether you are more adhoc in your organisation, some amount of preparation is key! It would be very easy to sit back and while away the time, but we are called to an active watching and waiting. An active season of preparation. 'Preparing for what?' I hear you say. I don't know, has to be my honest answer, which may make it more difficult to prepare, but we can look at our lives and consider what it is that we may want to change, or more importantly that God is urging us to change. The way ahead is unclear, but I know that God is with us. This does not make the waiting, watching or preparation easy, I know for one that I can get impatient, even frustrated when waiting, but our waiting and watching will not be in vain.

I am thankful to Andrew Ayre who has sent me an Advent Poem which I think speaks of some of the short term and the longer term waiting:

*Time passes.
Mary now in her 3rd trimester,
Is she on her way to Bethlehem?
Politicians dictate, trying to control.
Despite the clamour her progress cannot be rushed.
Everything in its time, God's time.
Hope is on its way, but are we ready
To share in the revelation, the Glory?
Have we used our talents wisely,
To proclaim release for the captives,
The bereaved, the downtrodden?
Will the world be changed
This time, this theophany?
Or the world unheeding of the shepherds,
Just business as usual?
The promise is new every morning:
God with us.*

Waiting cannot be rushed, the time cannot be sped up, but in the waiting, watching and preparing we find God. God who comes to us, who waits and watches with us and invites us to prepare our hearts and our lives for the future.

Keep safe, take care & God bless

Nathan



1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday 13th December for our Circuit Service brought together with people from Charles Street. Ian Matthews is the preacher.

Find it on the 'Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit' YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>) why not invite a friend to watch it with you and share the link with them on your social media or by email!

2. Circuit 'Zoom' Coffee Time

Join folk from across the circuit from 11:30am each Sunday morning - you provide the coffee - we'll provide the fellowship! pop in for 5 minutes or half an hour - we'd love to see you!

If you'd like help to 'Zoom', please get in touch!

Please join us afterwards

Come with a drink and a biscuit to share in conversation after the service.

www.zoom.us
Meeting ID: 885 3100 7185
Password: Tog3ther

Phone: 0131 460 1196
Meeting ID: 885 3100 7185
Password: 48647472



3. Radio Services

BBC Radio 4 (Also [online](#).)
08:10am – 13th December

Cities of Promise – A place in the heart

Father Martin Magill and the Rev David Compton reflect on what *A place in the heart* means for the City of Belfast.

4. Radio Nottingham

Listen every Sunday, at 8am, to a live church service on BBC Radio Nottingham. (Online or on 95.1-103.8 MHz FM for free.)

If any of this baffles you – call your minister



There is hope...

Our Sunday Sermon | Matthew 11:1-11 | Ian Matthews

In a culture like ours obsessed with fame and celebrity, I often find that the famous tend to come and go with some monotony. One of the distractions of growing older is that I never know who anybody is on TV. On a regular basis I have to ask my daughter who someone is and she tells me that 5 or 6 years ago they came third in X factor, or won Love Island, or are something called a social media influencer, and I bring to mind Andy Warhol's comment on the transitory nature of fame – in the future everyone will be world famous for 15 minutes.

This week we are thinking about John the Baptist - and my thoughts about fame are relevant as there is a similar sense of transition in Matthew chapter 11. At this time in his life Jesus is emerging out of the shadows; disciples, miracles, healings, crowds, popularity. John the Baptist on the other hand is in a much more difficult place, both physically and emotionally:

He's lived up to his calling as a prophet and has publicly criticised the personal life of King Herod. The King has done what all despots do when criticised – he has him arrested & imprisoned. John's followers have melted away and his name is no longer on the lips of the people. And in the loneliness and distress of his prison cell he has little to look forward to apart from a very uncertain future.

His job is done, he has been surpassed by the man whose sandals he is not fit to fasten. In many ways he is yesterday's man.

Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?

That's what John the Baptist asks of Jesus in verse 3 of Matthew 11, and what an extraordinary question it is.

Remember that Jesus is John's cousin – they have grown up together, John must have heard the family stories of angels, shepherds, inn keepers, wise men and may even have been present on that trip to Jerusalem when Jesus disappeared, drove his parents to distraction, and was found in the temple confounding the priests.

All that John has ever done from an early age has been to prepare for, and undertake his role, as the one who points to Jesus. Yet here he is asking - who are you? Are you really the Messiah that we have been waiting for all these years, or should we be looking somewhere else, and perhaps understandably given his circumstances he is also questioning who he is?

Has my life been worthwhile, or has it been a charade? Look Jesus - I've lived in discomfort in the desert, I've preached, prophesied, baptised, been arrested and imprisoned – all for you Jesus. And I want is some assurance that it has not been in vain and that you are the one.

I wonder if you have ever been in that place in your faith where you almost feel that you do not know who Jesus is anymore?

If so, you are not alone for the Christian faith is littered with folks who had similar doubts. Back in the 1960's Martyn Lloyd Jones, one of the greatest Baptist preachers of his day, wrote a book entitled 'Spiritual Depression' – essentially a collection of sermons based on Psalm 42.

And if you read that psalm you will see that it is one of those cries from the heart; we often sing the opening verse 'as the deer pants for the water so my soul longs after you' - but we are perhaps more reluctant to engage with the rest of the psalm. It contains a real struggle; it speaks of depression and isolation, doubt and fear. The psalmist suggests that God has even forgotten who he is, but he concludes with these encouraging words 'why are you downcast O my soul – put your hope in God.'

These last few months have been tricky haven't they? Food banks have never been busier; the high street has been decimated, almost daily we hear that another group of stores has gone into administration. Pubs and restaurants and hotels have closed, many never to reopen. I know that some of you will have experienced ill health, some may have lost family and friends to COVID, some furloughed from work, lost their jobs, or seen your business fail. Others have battled with isolation, depression and a lack of company. Goodness me – how we have missed not being able to meet together for worship, fellowship and company. But friends at this time of Advent, as we prepare for Christmas, turn your eyes upon Jesus, for there is hope!

Hope that burns bright and brighter still – for Jesus is coming; not just as the baby in Bethlehem; but one day in power and majesty and might and authority as the Lord of heaven and earth. There is hope for Jesus has promised that he will be with us, even to the ends of the earth and beyond; no matter what happens to us, no matter what COVID can throw at us, he is with us. There is hope because God has not finished with us yet; it is his intention to bring restoration, renewal and revival to his church and his world

There is hope because as Jesus says in verse 5; "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."

God is with us, active in his church and in his world and there is so much more for us to do

I can remember as a child that one of the best questions of the whole year from my parents or family was, what do you want for Christmas. And then there was element of tension, you didn't want to go too big, but crucially you didn't want to go too small either.

I don't know what you want for Christmas this year. But I encourage you to go big with God for Jesus is here, he is with us.

Prayer Space

Wonderful, Loving, Creator God,
As we journey through Advent,
help us to learn more about You,
and also ourselves.

Help us to recognise and grasp all
opportunities to build Your Kingdom.

Remind us that although we may not
be able to worship You together in our
Church buildings at this time, we are
able to worship You together in spirit.

Loving God, through John the Baptist
You prepared Your people for the
coming of Jesus all those years ago.
Please prepare us too, so that not only
are we ready when Jesus Christ comes
again but we have helped others to be
ready too.

Forgive us when we get it wrong –
we don't listen hard enough to You,
or we turn away from doing what we
know to be the right way,
or we walk by on the other side when
we encounter someone in need.

O Loving God, who, in Jesus, enabled
the blind to see, the deaf to hear and
the lame to walk, help us to be aware
of Your Presence with us as we worship
today, and may we show the joy of the
Advent message in our lives.

Through Jesus Christ,
our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

Jenny Hardy

EMAIL PRAYER CHAIN

*If you would like to join the prayer chain and
receive prayer requests or have a prayer request
(with permission of the recipient) please get in
touch with Colin...*

Colin Beckett colin1244@gmail.com.

It is for those in any church or none!

Dial-a-sermon

Can't get onto the YouTube Service? Want to
hear the Sunday sermon? Dial up at any time of
the day or night at the cost of a local call.

Press option 3 for the Sunday Sermon
(Sermons go live each Sunday.)

Dial a Sermon

01636 552255

Listen to the circuit sermon
each week.

Newark and Southwell
Methodist Circuit
helping you stay connected
whilst we're apart.



Hymns for the service

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service...

O for a thousand tongues to sing – StF 364 [LINK](#)

Wild and lone the prophets voice – StF 189 [LINK](#)

Long ago prophets knew – StF 178, H&P 83 [LINK](#)

There is a hope – SOF 1542 [LINK](#)

Click 'LINK's to access YouTube clips of each song.

Bubble Church Resources



Would you like to be part of Covid-Safe face-to-face church? Join a bubble today by getting in touch with your minister.

The following questions are designed to get you thinking and, if you're involved in Bubble Church talking about the topic!

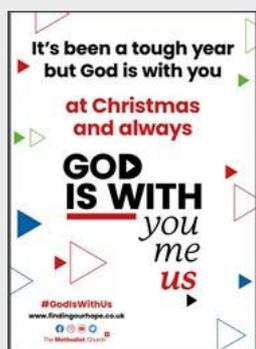
1. Can you relate to John the Baptist wondering if Jesus really was the Messiah?
2. How do you experience God? Have there been times when you have felt God closer than others?
3. Where do you see signs of hope?
4. What does hope mean to you?
5. What is God calling you to do, to be?

For more information checkout the Bubble Church guide with risk assessment on the Circuit Website:

<https://www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk/newsroom/bubble-church.html>

Next week...

Next week we continue our Advent journey with a service from the church family at Elston for the fourth Sunday in Advent. It will also be a special bumper issue to ensure that you have material for worship at home for Christmas Day and 27th December.



Christmas Quiz

Do you like a Christmas Quiz? To raise funds for Barnbygate Dianne Munford has prepared a Christmas Quiz and is willing to e-mail it to anyone interested in doing it. The questions are a mix of religious and Christmassy things. Please email munford.jandd@btinternet.com and Dianne will email you the questions (with the answers to follow). All donations gratefully received.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES by Katie Hibberts families4SMC@gmail.com

GAME: Shoe-tying competition

John said he was not worthy to tie Jesus' sandals. Have a shoe-tying competition with somebody else in your family. You will need to sit opposite one another with your shoes untied. You must each try to tie the other persons shoes at the same time. Who can complete the shoe tying first?

REFLECT: Just as John encouraged people to change their hearts and lives, we can use this advent season to prepare our own hearts and lives before God. Why not take on these challenges this week during Advent, you could do one each day or do them all at once.

DAY 1

Draw a picture of yourself on a piece of paper, pray and ask God to help you draw closer to Him this week.

DAY 2

Add to the picture to show you using a skill or talent that God has given you. How could you use that skill to serve and worship God today?

DAY 3

Draw a heart on your picture, pray and ask God to give you a heart more like His, full of love for the world.

DAY 4

Add a house to your picture, what ways can you think of that you could love and serve others in your household?

DAY 5

Who are the people you can share God's love with this week? Add them to your picture.

DAY 6

Write or draw a message to God today, spend some time saying sorry for any mistakes you know you have made this week.

DAY 7

Spend some time waiting on and listening to God today. Ask God if there are any areas in your life where you could serve Him better or be more obedient.

Can you contribute to TOGETHER?

We're looking to produce this Newsletter as a Circuit and would like to widen the team as far as possible. Perhaps you could contribute a prayer, a short article, an encouraging piece. Maybe you would be willing to be part of the editorial team? Perhaps you'd like us to advertise something in your church.

If you would like to join the team or make a one-off contribution, please get in touch with Revd Peter Hibberts by email (Peter.Hibberts@methodist.org.uk) or telephone (01636 812166).

Contributions must be received by Monday of each week for Tuesday editorial and Wednesday distribution.