

The third week of Advent celebrates John the Baptist, whose entire life was dedicated to pointing to glory beyond himself: pointing to the life of Jesus sharing his delight and awe at what God was doing. Advent is profoundly challenging because it invites us to look, and point, away from ourselves. It calls us to prepare the way for someone else.

Read Isaiah 35.1-10

1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus **2** it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
'Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.'

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
6 then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
7 the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

8 A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.

9 No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.

10 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.



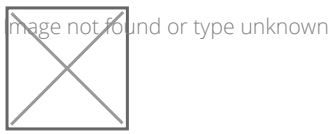
Jordan Wozniak

The questions are insistent in Advent: Who is it in our communities that we need to make space for? Who is unseen? We need to lose our preoccupation with the castles of the world and remember the sheds.

As we look beyond ourselves, we may find God in surprising places. With the refugee, the homeless, those who grieve. Advent and Christmas can be times of desolation for those who are alone, forgotten, or grieving the loss of those they love. Whoever we are, we are called to look beyond ourselves, to the God who promises to walk with us on the way.

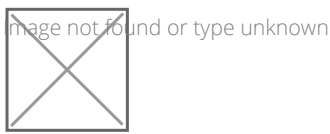
Archbishop Justin Welby and Rev Isabelle Hamley

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