



**St Matthew's Holland Park Weekly
Bulletin 15th December 2024**



**Welcome to the 3rd Sunday
of Advent: It's Joy Sunday!**

*This week's Revd. Morris' message: **What then should we do?***

In today's Gospel, we sample some of John the Baptist's preaching ... and, boy, he doesn't hold back does he? *I wonder how we would all feel to be called a Brood of Vipers from the parish pulpit by a guest preacher one Sunday?*

Yet, somewhat amazingly given his language, people were drawn to John, convicted and their lives changed in large numbers! Why? Because the Holy Spirit had stirred up the people to expect the coming of the Messiah and they were eager to prepare and receive Him. [Luke 3: 15].

By the way, notice John's humility. Despite his popularity, he doesn't seek to draw attention to himself or to flatter those to whom he preaches. Instead, he points all to Jesus, gives Him the Glory and announces Him as the Messiah [Luke 3:14 ff].

So, how does this all relate to this Sunday being 'Joy Sunday'? You may say : *'This brood of vipers stuff all doesn't sound too joyful to me ...?'*

The connection can be found in the manner in which John responds to the various people's question: **What then should we do?** John responds by addressing each who ask this question in terms of their own situation and proffering practical actions that can only flow from a changed heart, mind and spirit. *Feed the hungry, clothe the poor, be upright, honest, fair and content with what you have.* Notice that all who asked were largely powerless to change their circumstances - they couldn't by themselves solve the poverty crisis, the heavy taxation system and Roman oppression that figured in their lives - but, with God's Grace and in the power of the Holy Spirit present in their lives, they could be changed in themselves along with their values, attitudes and beliefs. Then, again only in Grace and Spirit, could they be empowered to make a positive difference in the lives of those around them. And this is exactly what John is challenging them to do.

You will remember that when Jesus said *"You will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy!"* during the Last Supper, he was referring to that emotion that occurs when deep shock, sadness and suffering miraculously gives way to the fulfilment of your fondest Godly desire - e.g. as the Disciple's despair at the Crucifixion gave way to the ecstatic joy of the Resurrection [see John 16:20 ff] This type of joy is not mere happiness dependant upon the current circumstances you experience but rather is a constant underlying emotion that is one of the 'fruits of the Holy Spirit' [Galatians 5:22].

So, what John is inviting his listeners to do is to repent, accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, enter into His rest and joy and, from that place of Grace, be about the Father's

business seeking to extend His Kingdom to those around them. It is this emotion of relief and Joy that is so wonderfully expressed in John Newton's Hymn 'Amazing Grace'.

Well, what does this mean for us today?

If social media is anything to go by, most folks are chasing *happiness* for themselves and their families. The problem is that happiness is ephemeral - and quickly passes. Yesterday's happiness is now not enough and we chase more and more to quench this never satisfied thirst. *Jesus' type of Joy* however is profoundly different. It is constant and derives from our relationship with Jesus, His work of salvation and sanctification in our lives, His promise of eternal life now, His ultimate return in Glory and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

So, some skills for joyful living are:

1. Learn to return to joy often and promptly;
2. Learn to receive joy gratefully;
3. Learn to give joy to others regularly; and
4. Learn to anticipate future joy eagerly.

I wonder what Jesus would say to us if we asked Him now : ***What then should we do?*** I also wonder what God may be calling us to do this Advent to repent and more fully receive and give Joy... in our own lives, and in that of our families, workplaces, communities, church and all those whom we touch?

Gospel reading: Luke 3:7-18 Some resources to dig deeper: <https://interruptingthesilence.com/2015/12/14/what-then-should-we-do-an-advent-sermon-on-luke-37-18/>; <https://ezraproject.com/chara-joy-to-the-world/>; <https://www.loc.gov/collections/amazing-grace/articles-and-essays/creation-of-amazing-grace/>

Upcoming Parish Activities: Midweek service : Wednesday 10:30 a.m; **Meditation Group** 6:30 p.m; **Every Sunday Guitars and Ukulele lessons** at 3 p.m; **Bible Study** Wednesday at 7 pm and Friday at 10:30 am;

Readings for Next Sunday: Micah 5: 2-5a; For the Psalm: The Song of Mary: Luke 1:47-55; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-55

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Parish website : <https://www.stmatthewshollandpark.com/>

Parish Private Facebook site : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/292308270851142> ; **Public Site:** <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556418523933> ; **Tipper's Treasure's Facebook site:** <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559040358754>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY:

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge their continued spiritual connection to country and surrounding land, sky and water. We pay our respect to their Elders, past present and emerging and pray that we may continue to learn from and nurture one another in the spirit of Reconciliation.

