

waiting, do your best to live lives without spot or stain so that he will find you at peace.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Lk 3:4, 6

Alleluia, alleluia!

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths: all people shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mk 1: 1-8

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

Make straight the paths of the Lord.

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before you;

he will prepare your way.

A voice cries in the wilderness:

Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight,

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, 'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT / B

10 DECEMBER 2023

IN THE WILDERNESS

In Australia we experience the desert and wilderness in all its beauty and expanse, yet it can be a lonely, dangerous place. Today we hear a voice crying out in the wilderness in the time of Isaiah and echoed in the Gospel. This voice also cries out to us today, in the wilderness and the desert of our lives. The voice is consolation: "Console, console my people" (Is 40:1). It bellows, "In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Is 40:3). Isaiah's words create an image of the landscape of our life and soul, in need of God.

The Gospel engages this imagery for John the Baptist, a guide in the wilderness who heralds the Messiah. Mark gives name to the voice just as he identified that this writing is "The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1). Although the name of Isaiah is invoked, the first quote is from Malachi "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way (1:2 cf. Mal 3:1); then comes the echo from Isaiah 40:3. Here in the wilderness John announces the one who is to come who will baptise with the Holy Spirit (Mark 7-8). This is the announcement of the Messiah, the one longed for. As we hear that voice in our wilderness, we know that Jesus is with us. We can reflect on our attention to his presence and our welcome to him in our souls and lives.

Dr Rosemary Canavan

FIRST READING

Isa 40:1-5, 9-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Prepare the way for the Lord.

'Console my people, console them' says your God.

'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her

that her time of service is ended,

that her sin is atoned for,

that she has received from the hand of the Lord double punishment for her crimes.'

A voice cries, 'Prepare in the wilderness a way for the Lord.

Make a straight highway for our God across the desert.

Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low, let every cliff become a plain, and the ridges a valley;

then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all mankind shall see it;

for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

Go up on a high mountain, joyful messenger to Zion.

Shout with a loud voice,

joyful messenger to Jerusalem.

Shout without fear,

say to the towns of Judah,

'Here is your God.'

Here is the Lord coming with power, his arm subduing all things to him.

The prize of his victory is with him, his trophies all go before him.

He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms,

holding them against his breast

and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 84:9-14. R. v. 8

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

1. I will hear what the Lord God has to say,/ a voice that speaks of peace,/ peace for his people./ His help is near for those who fear him/ and his glory will dwell in our land. **R.**



2. Mercy and faithfulness have met;/ justice and peace have embraced./ Faithfulness shall spring from the earth/ and justice look down from heaven. **R.**

3. The Lord will make us prosper/ and our earth shall yield its fruit./ Justice shall march before him/ and peace shall follow his steps. **R.**

SECOND READING

2 Pet 3:8-14

A reading from the second letter of St Peter.

We wait for new heavens and a new earth.

There is one thing, my friends, that you must never forget: that with the Lord, 'a day' can mean a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord is not being slow to carry out his promises, as anybody else might be called slow; but he is being patient with you all, wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to be brought to change his ways. The Day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then with a roar the sky will vanish, the elements will catch fire and fall apart, the earth and all that it contains will be burnt up.

Since everything is coming to an end like this, you should be living holy and saintly lives while you wait and long for the Day of God to come, when the sky will dissolve in flames and the elements melt in the heat. What we are waiting for is what he promised; the new heavens and new earth, the place where righteousness will be at home. So then, my friends, while you are