

## Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

Strengthen all weary hands, steady all trembling knees, and say to all faint hearts, 'Courage! Do not be afraid. Look your God is coming!'

*First Reading*

It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever,  
who is just to those who are oppressed.

It is he who gives bread to the hungry,  
the Lord who sets prisoners free.

*Psalms*

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
ever faithful to your promises and ever close to your Church:  
the earth rejoices in hope of the Saviour's coming,  
and looks forward with longing to his return at the end of time.

Prepare our hearts and remove the sadness  
that hinders us from feeling the joy and hope  
which his presence will bestow,  
for he is Lord for ever and ever.

*Old Opening Prayer*

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:

Isaiah 35: 1–6.10; Psalm 145 (146); James 5: 7–10; Matthew 11: 2–11



Strengthen all weary hands  
Isaiah 35

If you'd like to receive Prego by email each week, sign up at  
[www.stbeunosoutreach.wordpress.com](http://www.stbeunosoutreach.wordpress.com)

ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Third Sunday of Advent, 'Gaudete' Sunday  
Year A, 11th December 2022

Rejoice, the Lord is near!

On this 'Gaudete' Sunday, the liturgy begins with an invitation to 'rejoice!' Just as in the darkness of midwinter we long for light, so in the darkness of a world suffering the consequences of war and human greed, we long for the transforming light of Christ. But all around us are prophetic signs of God's love at work, bringing us hope in darkness, and reminding us of the joyful life we are called to live. Today the Scriptures encourage us to listen, and to see the prophetic voices and signs of our times.

In the **First Reading**, Isaiah acclaims a joyful vision of Christ's coming. Dimmed eyes will be opened; the lame will leap for joy; and we can have courage because the Lord is near.

The **Psalms** share a vision of the Lord overcoming our human hardship, bringing justice and healing to the world.

The **Second Reading** is a letter of encouragement, counselling us to be watchful and patient. The Lord is close at hand.

The **Gospel** describes a meeting between Jesus and the followers of the imprisoned John. Jesus answers their questions by referencing both the prophecies of Isaiah and today's Psalm. John is a prophet of their time, and Jesus encourages John's disciples not to lose faith. Jesus himself is the one of whom the ancient prophets spoke.

As followers of Christ, let us take courage, and prayerfully support one another to be patient and faithful to the liberating message of the Good News. We belong to a loving community that longs for, and trusts in, the light of Christ, even in the midst of long winter nights and during these challenging times.



### Opening Prayer

O God, who see how your people  
faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,  
enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation  
and to celebrate them always  
with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.

## Second Reading James 5: 7–10

**B**e patient, sisters and brothers, until the Lord's coming. Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the ground until it has had the autumn rains and the spring rains! You too have to be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon. Do not make complaints against one another, sisters and brothers, so as not to be brought to judgement yourselves; the Judge is already to be seen waiting at the gates. For your example, sisters and brothers, in submitting with patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

It may help me to prepare to pray by focusing on some image that speaks to me of Advent: perhaps an Advent wreath, or a candle. Or I may like to find an Advent carol or some other music that brings me a spirit of watching ... of longing ... of waiting ... of light shining in darkness.

I take time to settle my mind and body in whichever way suits me best. I gently notice any distractions that come to mind, and with compassion place them before God and guide my attention back to my prayer focus.

I wait ... in silence ... and in stillness.

When I am ready, I slowly read or listen to the scripture reading.

I repeat phrases or words, and let them sink deep within my being, listening again to any words and phrases to which I am drawn.

Why are these words important to me?

What stirs within me?

I talk to God about all that I notice.

Have there been things in my life or in my faith community that have caused me to 'lose heart'?

What is important to me in my faith?

Are there people in my church or family who need some encouragement at this time? How might I be a prophetic presence for them?

'Patience' is mentioned three times in this short passage. Is there something for which I need the grace of patience?

I ask God for whatever it is that I need.

I close my prayer by saying *Our Father* ...

## Gospel Matthew 11: 2–11

**J**ohn in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is come, or have we got to wait for someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the one who does not lose faith in me.'

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? Someone wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you.'

I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

The Lord is near, even when I find it hard to believe or understand.

With simple faith, I settle in silence before my loving Lord.

When I feel ready, I slowly read the Gospel as many times as I need.

I may like to use my imagination to enter into the scene.

Maybe I am a disciple of John who has been sent to meet Jesus?

Or perhaps I see events unfolding as a bystander, and listen to Jesus as he teaches the people.

Where does this meeting take place?

What do I see, and what do I notice about the followers of John and the people who have come to hear Jesus? What are they seeking?

What am I seeking?

How do I feel as I listen to Jesus's response to the disciples?

The prophets, the psalmist, and the actions and words of Jesus are all teaching and preparing me ... but for what?

I share with Jesus my thoughts and feelings about all that has arisen for me during my time of prayer, as I would to a dear friend ... and I listen to him.

When I am ready, I close my prayer with my own words of gratitude.