

Advent 3 14th December 2025 St James morning Worship 10.30am.

Isaiah 35;1-10 James 5;7-10 Mathew 11;2-11.

May these words I preach be acceptable to you our lord and saviour. Amen .

So where do you even start to understand these 3 readings from Isaiah, James and Mathew.?

Isaiah paints a picture of a glorious restored future path, the wilderness that is barren, is suddenly blooming flowers that for a few weeks make the dessert seemed miraculous transformed ,colourful wild flowers after hydrating rainfall, where these seeds have lay dormant in the arid dry dessert ,but on receiving water spring into full bloom .The power of this rainfall overnight makes it a beautiful sight to behold .It is a real treat for the senses .He is talking of a road back for faithful believers a road of encouragement and filled with mercy for those who have sinned, but have put their trust in Jesus .Remember Isaiah predicted the birth of Jesus some 600 years before the first Christmas.

James urges everyone to be patient, like a farmer awaiting his harvest, and just like the dessert is dependent on the rains coming for the crops to bloom and grow. But just like the dessert the farmer does not have control over the weather. He must trust in the seasons and strengthen his resolve to watch and wait for the coming harvest. James also tells us not to grumble and moan about each other, own up to our part in it, when things go wrong, by our own confession we are helping to build up Gods kingdom, for the king will come when the time is right.

So here we can see a link between Isaiah of the Old Testament and James in the New Testament, as both are talking about transformation, both looking forward to the future and the coming of the lord, for the lord is nearby.

We hear in Mathew of John the Baptist in prison and on hearing the things that Jesus was doing asks if he really is the Messiah, the one he preached about, the one we have all been waiting for, or should we be looking for someone else?

Jesus sends back Johns disciples telling them to tell him of the things they have seen him do, that now the blind see, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear and the dead are raised to life, the lame leap for joy and that the good

news is being preached to the poor and that God blesses all those who are not offended by him .

When John's disciples had left Jesus starts asking them who they thought John was as he wasn't dressed in the richest of clothes or ate expensive meals, neither did he live in a palace, but lived out in the wilderness, dressed in camel hair cloaks and eating wild honey and locusts who talked of being a messenger for the one who was to follow him, all he was doing was preparing the way for him, John was a prophet.

Maybe we can see the barren desert that Isaiah talks about and in James the patience of waiting for harvest. I think Matthew is referring to the vast movement towards God that began with John's preaching in the desert. He knew that Jesus was coming, Jesus would make a way.

I can see myself here as there have been times in my life when I have questioned Jesus and just what he is doing, in my life at the moment, Maybe I don't see the transformation of my life at the time, in fact I would say I was probably in my own personal prison.

In this prison it can be made up of Guilt, sometimes anger or feeling trapped by life's circumstances they are internal struggles and they can weigh very heavy on my shoulders.

So where do I go? well just as I do when I am happy and everything is going ok, I turn to God , I run towards him and I have open discussions with him, sometimes through prayer ,sometimes by shouting at him, I believe God won't Judge me ,he will just listen and I put my faith in the fact that Jesus already knows what I am going through.

Sometimes I get the answer straight away, at other times I am told to wait. The waiting times are the hardest, but sometimes in this waiting time is when I not only question what God is up to, but it's also the time of self-reflection where I might I get angry, even feel guilty that maybe this life circumstance was of all my own making. Maybe I didn't listen or pray about what I thought God had got lined up for me, did I act on what I thought was his will for me? only realising later I had acted upon my own will ignoring the voice of God ,but once I realised and came back to him in confession, it was then he welcomed me back but I had to wait why he was working for my good in the background of my life .

Did I act irrationally? Did I do something bad? I read my bible sometimes it helped, at other times it confused me, maybe I am not understanding what the scripture says. But I never give up.

I sometimes talk to a trusted friend, I ask for forgiveness from God, but still, I am waiting. Then one day out of the blue I realise that the transformation in my life has happened. I didn't see it at the time, but Jesus has been at work all this time in my life but only chose to reveal it to me when I was ready to accept it.

This to me seems just What Mathew is talking about, Jesus was there working away all the time, but it is only when our eyes are opened and our ears listen to his words that slowly but surely are lives are transformed by his love and service to us. The lord is near, and he is going to come again very soon, we don't know when the hour or the day will be, but we must be ready and wait patiently.

Christmas sees us celebrate the very first coming of Jesus in that humble little baby who came to save humanity, but as Christians we also anticipate his second coming in majesty in all his glory and power and might.

So, Isaiah is waiting for the transformative power to make a way through the barren dessert that will bloom with all life when he arrives. James will reap his harvest after waiting for so long and Mathew tells us that we too should be ready and waiting in joyful expectation, by preparation, by repentance, by prayer, to live faithfully.

The very word Advent means the arrival of a notable person or something, it is the first season of the church's year leading up to Christmas and is seen as the second coming of Christ.

So, just as we are preparing our homes for Christmas, let us also prepare our hearts and minds and wait in patience to celebrate the hope, peace, joy and love that comes into this world at Christmas in the form of a baby.

I wish you all Hope Peace Joy and Love this Christmas and in the year ahead.

Amen.

