

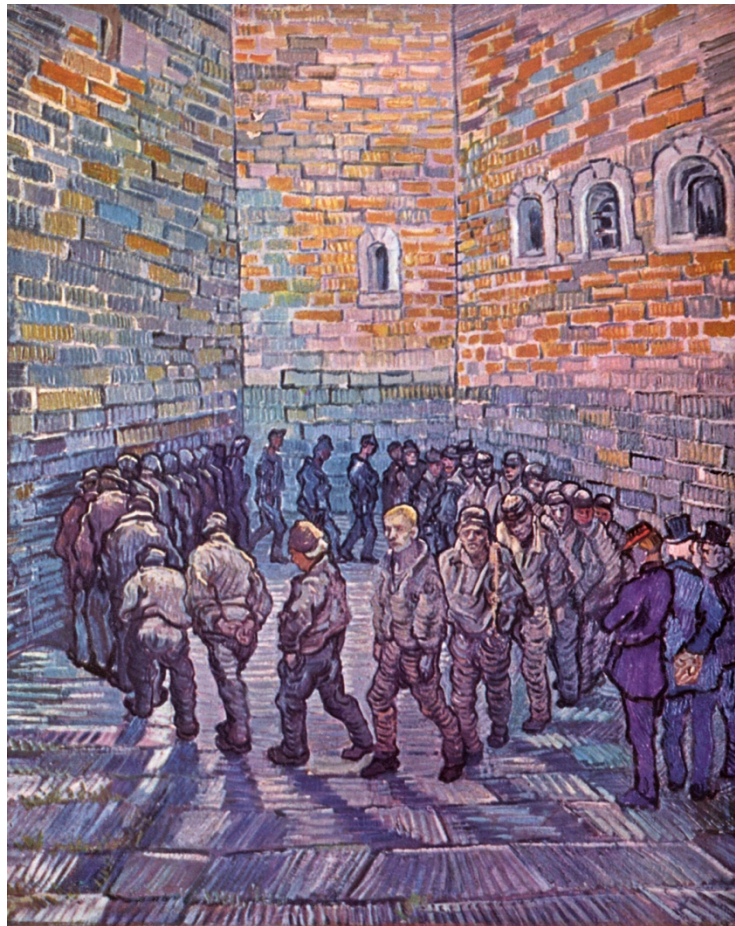
In the beginning was the Word...

An Advent & Christmas Course from the Diocese of Aberdeen & Orkney



Spirit

Sunday 17th December 2023



Gogh, Vincent van, 1853-1890. Prisoners Exercising, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-image/link.pl?RC=55362> [retrieved December 16, 2023]. Original source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent_Willem_van_Gogh_037.jpg

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.
For I the Lord love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.
I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

To reflect:

Today's reading from the prophet Isaiah provides the source the word for reflection: 'Spirit'.

Isaiah 61 gives a statement and job description about God's intention; the people are reminded that God has not forgotten them. The reading contains themes of justice, hope, anticipation and deliverance. These are words of transformation which are joyous, speak of change and a better world to come.

At the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry in Luke 4, Jesus reads Isaiah 61:1-2 and declares that "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21) to a group of people gathered at the synagogue in Nazareth. This was not a joyous occasion in what followed next with Jesus being rejected at Nazareth.

However, the overriding theme of this reading from Isaiah is transformation and joy in that transformation. The Holy Spirit helps transform us as we travel in our Christian lives and as we seek to transform the world. This Sunday is 'Gaudete Sunday', the Sunday we remember joy when lighting Advent Candles. On this Sunday what gives you joy in seeing the world transformed? What makes your Spirit soar?

To listen

Arise, Shine for Your Light has Come by Cardiphonia Music and Jared McKenna (a canticle based on Isaiah 60) <https://open.spotify.com/track/0Bz0kFW6zb1vbLgi3pdZkJ?si=ff22140cb2db4253>

Gaudete by Anonymous, one version is by the St Paul's Cathedral Choir
<https://open.spotify.com/track/4G2RX3QqhXj3qH73QteRry?si=48ffbe1450b24db0>

The word for each day (3-25 December is taken from Advent Word 2023 #adventword).

...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.