

Advent Words

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



Mercy

Saturday 21st December

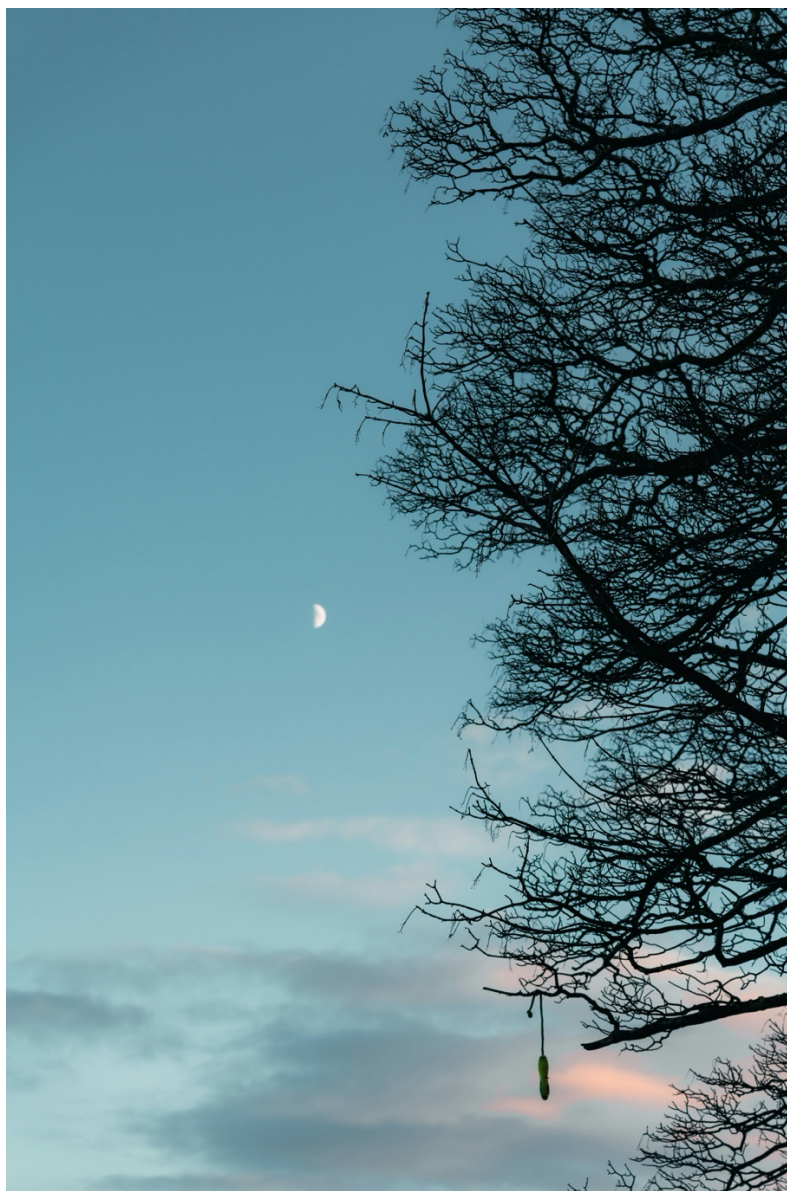


Photo by Bayo Adegunloye on Unsplash

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
The Lord has taken away the judgements against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.
The Lord, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.

To reflect

The dictionary definition of the noun mercy is ‘compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm.’ This applies to God, but in Christian theology we can see God's mercy revealed in the actions God takes to demonstrate faithfulness and steadfast love. God is merciful and it is a quality that God expects of God's people. The main Hebrew term used for mercy can be translated as ‘lovingkindness’, whilst the Greek term can be used to mean compassion, to show mercy for.

In today's reading from Zephaniah (which overlaps with last Sunday's reading's verses) we can see the song charging the people to trust God and not fear. At this time of year and on this longest night/shortest day of the year it can feel that we are at the mercy of the elements. The promise of God's love and mercy is that the light of world – Jesus came to earth for us all to be Emmanuel – God With Us, the morning star.

Advent Antiphon: O Oriens

O Morning Star*

**O radiance of the everlasting Light, O sun of Righteousness:
Come, shed your light on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.**

O Oriens by Malcolm Guite

E vidi lume in forme de riviera Paradiso XXX; 61

First light and then first lines along the east
To touch and brush a sheen of light on water
As though behind the sky itself they traced

The shift and shimmer of another river
Flowing unbidden from its hidden source;
The Day-Spring, the eternal Prima Vera.

Blake saw it too. Dante and Beatrice
Are bathing in it now, away upstream...
So every trace of light begins a grace

In me, a beckoning. The smallest gleam
Is somehow a beginning and a calling;
“Sleeper awake, the darkness was a dream

For you will see the Dayspring at your waking,
Beyond your long last line the dawn is breaking”.

From Sounding the Seasons (Canterbury Press, 2012)

To Listen (these and other suggestions can be found on a Spotify playlist at

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0F5bU2sf4OiOtQY3q78Rf2?si=a99cbbf61e7d4587>)

- Settings of today's Antiphon include ‘O Morning Star’ by Michael Praetorius, one version is by Apollo's Fire and Jeannette Sorrell and ‘O Oriens’ by Margaret Rizza, one version is by the Gaudete Ensemble and Eamonn Dougan.
- ‘Winter Song’ by Sara Bareilles and Ingrid Michaelson, performed by the writers or by Leslie Odom Jr. and Cynthia Erivo. The refrain of this song asks ‘Is love alive?’

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