

Second Sunday of Advent – 8th December 2024

	Gospel (Luke 3:1-6)	First Reading (Baruch 5:1-9)	Second Reading (Philippians 1:4-6. 8-11)
Context	Luke's gospel describes Jesus' birth, childhood and development. Jesus was the ideal human and lived the perfect human life. Luke also tells us that John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' coming.	The Book of Baruch tells us about Israel's disobedience to God, the exiling of Jews to Babylon, and God's just action. It also describes the need to repent, honor and obey God, and to seek God's mercy.	Paul's letter to the Philippians helped to strengthen the faith of believers by explaining that true joy comes from Jesus Christ alone.
Key verses	<i>"...all mankind shall see the salvation of God."</i>	<i>"God means to show...splendor to every nation under heaven"</i>	<i>"...become pure and blameless, and prepare...for the Day of Christ..."</i>
Key themes/ messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke's gospel sets the scene for John's "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins". Several prominent leaders were responsible for upholding Roman law and maintaining peace throughout Judah. • The word of God came to John the Baptist, who was Jesus' cousin. • John's main mission was to prepare the way for the Messiah (Jesus) by baptising repentant followers with water. • John's ministry was foretold by the prophet Isaiah, who promised salvation to all mankind. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The removal of Jerusalem's "dress of sorrow and distress" refers to an act of repentance by God's people for their sin. • Instead of burdening themselves with sin, the people of Jerusalem were called upon to reflect God's beauty, glory and integrity. • God remains faithful to his people, despite their sins, and he wants to clearly distinguish his faithful believers throughout all the nations. • God will always protect us, even through difficult times. We can have full confidence in his guidance, mercy and integrity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul's joy stemmed from the help he was given by the Philippians in spreading the gospel message. By helping Paul, the Philippians also glorified Christ. • The "Day of Christ Jesus" refers to the time of Jesus' second coming to us – a day we must all prepare ourselves for. • In preparing for Jesus' second coming, Paul prays for greater love between the people, as well as increased knowledge and perception of God's word. These blessings will help us to become "pure and blameless" before God.
Questions/ application to our lives	How would you describe the connection between baptism and the forgiveness of sins? How does the gospel passage help us to prepare for Jesus' second coming, and do you think that Luke's gospel hints at a sense of urgency in doing so? What action can we take to make "straight paths" for Jesus' return?	Saying "sorry" to God for our sins is not always easy, as it often challenges us to change our thoughts and behaviours. Do you think Baruch's words encourage us to seek God's forgiveness through repentance for our sins? If so, what action will you take in order to receive God's mercy and blessings?	When we pray to God, do we tend to pray for ourselves more than others? If so, do Paul's words change our view of how we should pray? What do you think Paul had in mind when he prayed for a deepening perception to always recognise what is best? Explain.
Further reading			