

A Advent 2

3rd November 2016

Place: St Mary's

Isa 11.1-10, Rom 15.4-13

Theme: Broken Creation

Matt 3.1-12

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- ◆ How does the world feel to you at the moment? It feels like rather a dark and frightening place to me. The world has become an unpredictable place. Opinions I thought I shared with most people have turned out to be in the minority. The American people seem to have chosen a vainglorious fool to lead them and no one (including Trump) knows what the consequences of his actions will be. In addition, we see wars in which the innocent are slaughtered and where the destruction seems to continue with no hope of peace. Closer to home too there has been a rise in hate crime following the Brexit vote. We are discovering that there seems to be no area of our public or social life where children have not been abused and exploited and where those with power have at best turned a blind eye. It is easy to see why John the Baptist called the people who came out to see him a brood of vipers. We have all been in places where groups of people have acted abusively or cruelly. Maybe we have been one of those people.
- ◆ When John calls the people a brood of vipers he is speaking in a prophetic tradition that goes right back through the history of Israel. From Moses onward God called the prophets to challenge sin and evil and to call the people to repentance. The prophets of the Old Testament have a clear-sighted view of human sin. They see that human sin not only damages and destroys human life, but it has corrupted the whole of creation. When Adam and Eve disobey God and eat the fruit of the tree of Good and Evil they are not only thrown out of paradise, but there is a rupture in the whole of creation. Death and destruction come into play. Paul also develops

this theme in Romans saying that the whole of creation is subject to frustration until human beings are redeemed.

- ◆ The world is a beautiful place, there is so much that is wonderful about it. Human beings can be the most amazing creatures on the planet, but there is a dark side both to human beings and nature.
- ◆ Darwin stopped believing in God when he discovered parasitic wasps. These horrible creatures lay their eggs inside other living creatures, the eggs hatch and the larvae eat the living host from the inside out, finally killing it just as they mature. They then hatch out of the body of the dead host to begin the cycle again. Darwin could not understand how a loving God could have created such a creature.
- ◆ Darwin did not read enough of the Old Testament. The way things are now, Isaiah tells us, is not the way God wants them to be. When the knowledge of God once again fills the world, when we and all creation are once again close to God, in intimate relationship with God, 'the lion will eat straw like the ox' and the parasitic wasp will feed its young on pollen.
- ◆ So how do we live as people of faith in this dark and broken world? Well first I think we need to face reality. We need to recognise that the world is not how God wants it to be, we are not how God wants us to be and that all too often in the world 'God's will is not done.' We need to acknowledge that some of us are wolves and some of us are lambs. Indeed we probably need to recognise that we can be both, depending on where we are and who we are with.
- ◆ We also need to remember that the prophets which challenging us to recognise the truth about ourselves and wake us out of our complacency, also bring words of hope. They look forward to the day when the wolf will live in the house of the lamb. God is coming to save the

world, Jesus the lamb of God is coming to redeem us wolves and lambs alike. He is coming to fill creation with the knowledge of God. He is coming to make straight what has gone crooked, to heal what is broken, to do God's will on earth.

- ◆ He is inviting us, the baptised, to come and live in the house of the lamb now. He is calling us as the church to start living as if this new world had already begun. He promises to send us the Holy Spirit to help us do this, because we cannot do it on our own. In the Church, we can know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We can know God who far transcends us, God who is alongside us, we can know God who dwells in us. Together we can start to be the people who dwell in the house of the lamb. We can live together in a way that is different from being a brood of vipers. Through our Baptism into the body of Christ we come together as the Church to learn how to be truly human, how to reflect God's image in ourselves. We learn how to love and be loved both by one another and by God. This is the work of the church. This is our work. If we can truly do this we will bring light to this dark world of ours.