Second Sunday of Advent (B) 2017

Don’t be cheerful; don’t look on the bright side of life; don’t count your blessings. Admit it - the world has never been in a worse state; its leaders are hopeless; society has lost all decent moral values. We are using up our planet without a thought for future generations; polluting our atmosphere with carbon; filling our oceans with plastic. Let us stay with this gloom for a while - plus whatever private causes for gloom we may have. But only for a while (sadly there are those who have made it their permanent state). If we acknowledge these things that can fill us with fear and anxiety then we will hear the Word of God all the more powerfully:-

‘“Console my people, console them” says your God.’

‘I will hear what the Lord God has to say,

a voice that speaks of peace,

peace for his people.

His help is near for those who fear him

and his glory will dwell in our land.’

‘A voice cries in the wilderness; “Prepare a way for the Lord”’

If we are abandoned to the failings of our very imperfect world; if our only distractions are the idiocies of what is on telly or drink or drugs; if we are simply creatures evolved to be born, to breed and to die then gloom is a sensible mood to stay with. But today we hear the message of hope.

We are like the first audience of John the Baptist - we need to hear words of joy - the Good News. News that takes aware the power of all the depressing things we hear.

Listening to the Gospel, praying and living good Christian lives doesn’t take all the bad news away - but it takes its sting away; its power to undermine and destroy.

We need to take to ourselves the hope that the coming of God among us brings; to lift our faces to the light. And, most pressingly, we must do what John the Baptist did - let others know the Good News we have heard. For one thing we can be very sure of - our world is ready to hear this message of hope.