Dear friend
Many thanks to Judith for preparing this week's virtual service. She has chosen our opening hymns, 'On Jordan's bank', to Winchester new, here courtesy of Chet Valley churches:
https://youtu.be/pIr21lLgFpg

and 'Hark the glad sound', sung here to Bristol by the choir of St Luke's Chelsea:
https://youtu.be/Scx7catC2hE

Judith has suggested also 'Every valley shall be exalted' from Handel's Messiah; here it is in a classical recording by LSO, conducted by Colin Davis and sung by Mark Padmore:
https://youtu.be/7NCO6UzZ2R8

The renaissance composer Antoine de Févin's setting of 'Nesciens mater', sung at Ely Cathedral by Gesualdo 6 (well, four of them):
https://youtu.be/URLktpLC4Dc

'Prepare ye the way of the Lord', from a 2009 performance of Godspell:
https://youtu.be/zQU4iPpWxV0?list=TLPQMDMxMjIwMjHHe_vvkPZRUA

Finally, Michael W Smith's take on 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord':
https://youtu.be/R27fsQSIEEc?list=TLPQMDMxMjIwMjHHe_vvkPZRUA

Happy Advent!
Chris

SERVICE FOR SUNDAY 5th DECEMBER
The Second Sunday of Advent



And you, child, will be called the Prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.
(Luke 1:76-77 NRSV)

CONFESSION
Lord God, our maker and our redeemer, this is your world and we are your people: come among us and save us. We have heard the good news of Christ, but have failed to share it with others; Lord, be merciful. *May God who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to be our Saviour, forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve him in the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.* (Common Worship)

COLLECT
O Lord, raise up we pray your power, and come among us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS
Malachi 3:1-4; The Benedictus (Morning Prayer, BCP/CW, or Luke 1:68-79);Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6.

REFLECTION
Luke, believed to be a doctor, the only Gentile gospel writer, is also a bit of a historian – in more than one part of his account of Jesus's life, he places events in historical context. This can still be rather difficult for us to identify accurately, but Luke's readers would have had a clear idea of his account being fact, not fiction; there is no 'once upon a time' here. We understand that John the Baptist came at a specific time to proclaim good news, and also to spell out the obligation on the part of those who wished to enter the promised kingdom. Repentance – turning around - was a requirement, and John gathered crowds in the wilderness as he preached this concept. We are used to hearing the beautiful words from Isaiah, quoted in verses 4-6, and they can flow over us rather gently. But this is no gentle prospect. Hills levelled, valleys raised up? This is serious work nowadays for heavy machinery. How much more astounding did it sound in the time of Isaiah's prophecy or John's urgent preaching. The world must be turned upside down in order to make a smooth pathway for the King! As the passage from Malachi indicates, it will be a tough experience, stripping away all impurities. Paul prays that, 'your love may overflow more and more with full insight, to help you determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless.' On that day, the world's people will, at last, be able to recognise God's long promised salvation.

PRAYERS
Living Lord, we give thanks for this time of reflection, and as we think of the good news of the coming of your kingdom, we pray for all people who share in our worship and praise today.
We pray for the world, reflecting for a few moments on items of news which may have astonished or appalled us this week. We pray for all groups or individuals whose stories have affected us.
A prayer by Anne Brown*: Lord, we pray for refugees and those who have had to flee their countries of origin, seeking sanctuary, new life and freedom, far away from home. As we welcome newcomers, may strangers become friends, and may we be open to what they bring to us. Broaden our vision, and help us to remember that we, the human race, are all one people.*
We pray for all who are suffering in body, mind or spirit. In a moment of silence, we pray for those specially known to us……
Shine your light into their lives, we pray, and bring them the comfort of your healing love. Amen.

We say **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

We share **THE GRACE**

A FINAL PRAYER
Light of the world, you have drowned our darkness by your presence. You give purpose to each new day, and hope for today and tomorrow. Saviour Christ, help us to shine with your light and demonstrate your hope, so that your presence in us brings light and hope to others. Amen (Graham Thompson)