

# Resources on the Sunday Readings

## Advent 3

Picture Reflection (p1- 2)

Bible Study (p3 & 4)

All Age Activity (p5)

**Picture Reflection** – prepared by Brenda

**Mystery of the Messiah**

**John 1: 6-8, 19-28**

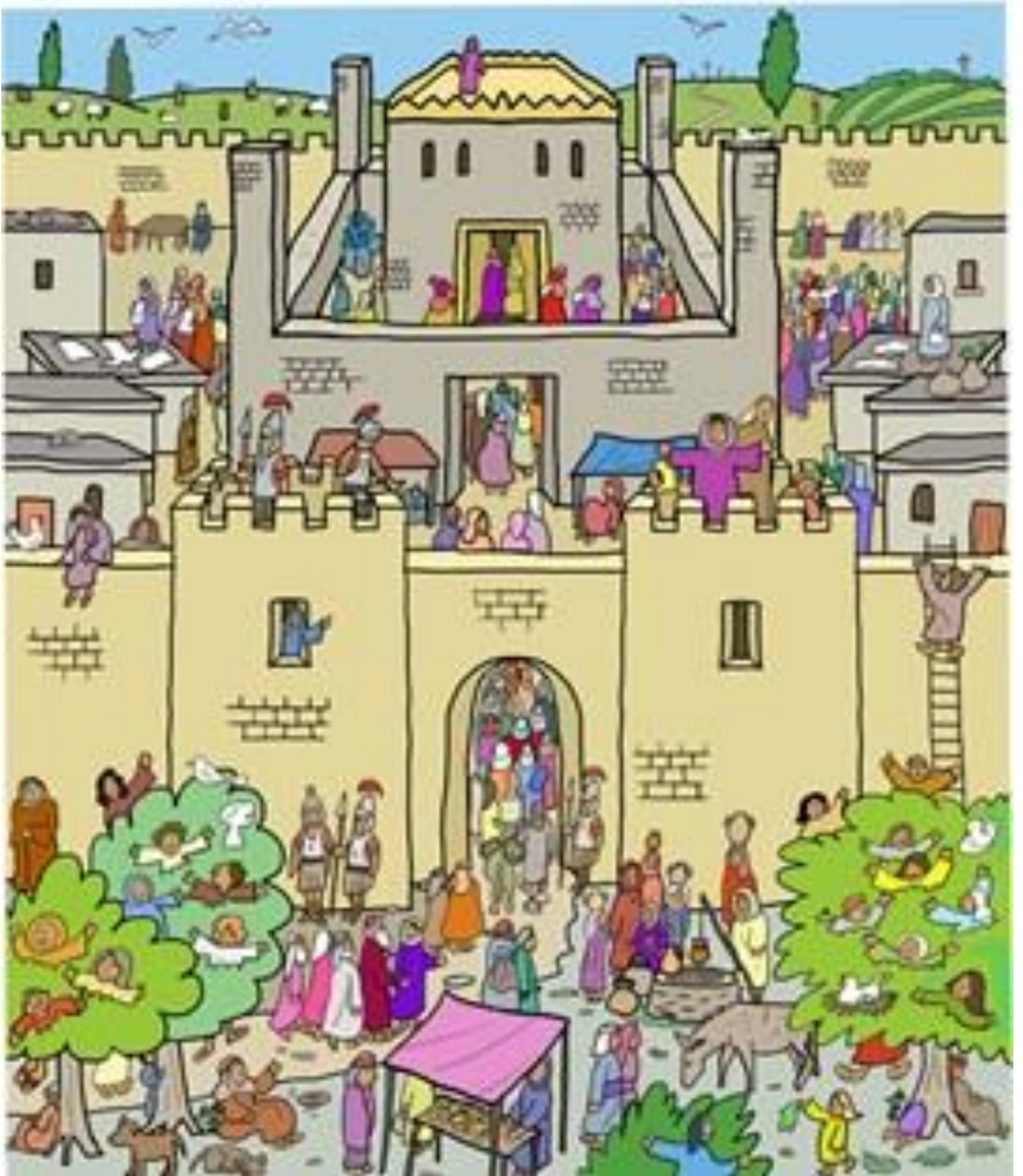
*The Messiah was expected ...the prophets and John the Baptist foretold his coming. He was among them, though they didn't know it yet. The time was approaching when he would be revealed.*

Spend a few minutes looking carefully at the enlarged picture on the page below.

- Can you find the Messiah? How did you recognise him?
- How can we recognise the mystery of the presence of the Messiah in our everyday lives?
- How do you feel about mysteries and unanswered questions?
- What would you say to the Messiah? Is there anything you would ask him?

*That is followed by Bible Study Questions*

*Don't forget to also look out for the Word Search Activity too!*



## Bible Study Questions – prepared by Alan

### 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

*For our Sunday readings this is seemingly an odd passage to ‘slip in’ amongst all the build-up to Christmas, but those who are following Morning Prayer will know that Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians is being explored day by day at the moment.*

*For Paul, his ministry in Thessalonica was somewhat of a ‘test paper’, because what worked here would support his ongoing ministry elsewhere. Thessalonica, politically, socially and economically, was a strategic location, on the road from Rome to the East, from Adriatic to the Bosphorus and on to Asia Minor - the M27 of the Mediterranean!*

*So, for his own reputation Paul wanted to make this evangelical visit a success, and what we have read this week comes from his blueprint for a successful church.*

*Just read the passage through again:*

*16 Rejoice always, 17pray without ceasing, 18give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise the words of prophets,[e] 21 but test everything; hold fast to what is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound[f] and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.*

*Paul’s hallmarks for a genuine church are:*

*happiness (16), prayerfulness(17), thankfulness(18): so:*

- *how does our worship at St James reflect these essential characteristics?*
- *What make you happy as a member of the Christian church?*
- *Does our ‘St James’ community’ encourage you in prayer, now, and/or before the Covid outbreak?*
- *Think about what makes you thankful at the moment, in response to the will of God.*

*[see next page for gospel reading and questions]*

## **John 1:6-8,19-28**

*So, John the Baptist is definitely in the frame at the moment as an integral part of the Advent story. Last week the opening of Mark's Gospel heralded the his arrival as John the baptizer, and this week John the Evangelist give John the Baptist some column inches as he describes his almost defiant presence in the evolution of preparing the way for the Messiah. Defiant, maybe, but also modest, as in an unassuming way he makes sure that his actions aren't mistaken for those of the Christ to come.*

*Here is the reading again, using the contemporary 'Message' remix by Eugene H Peterson, who produced this version to encourage people simply to read the Bible again*

*6-8 There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light. 19-20 When Jews from Jerusalem sent a group of priests and officials to ask John who he was, he was completely honest. He didn't evade the question. He told the plain truth: "I am not the Messiah." 21 They pressed him, "Who, then? Elijah?" "I am not." "The Prophet?" "No." 22 Exasperated, they said, "Who, then? We need an answer for those who sent us. Tell us something—anything! —about yourself." 23 "I'm thunder in the desert: 'Make the road straight for God!' I'm doing what the prophet Isaiah preached." 24-25 Those sent to question him were from the Pharisee party. Now they had a question of their own: "If you're neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet, why do you baptize?" 26-27 John answered, "I only baptize using water. A person you don't recognize has taken his stand in your midst. He comes after me, but he is not in second place to me. I'm not even worthy to hold his coat for him." 28 These conversations took place in Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing at the time.*

- *So, how was he received by the people of the time, the Jews, the Levites, the priests?*
- *How would we receive such a figure today, preparing the way for 'something' that we were expecting, yet not that 'something'?*
- *How would we know that a modern-day John the Baptist had authority, so that we could believe him?*
- *How do we ratify or authenticate information that is presented to us?*
- *How do we identify and discard fake news?*

*No prizes for any answers you may come up with, but use this time of reflection as part of your preparing to welcome Jesus again this Advent*

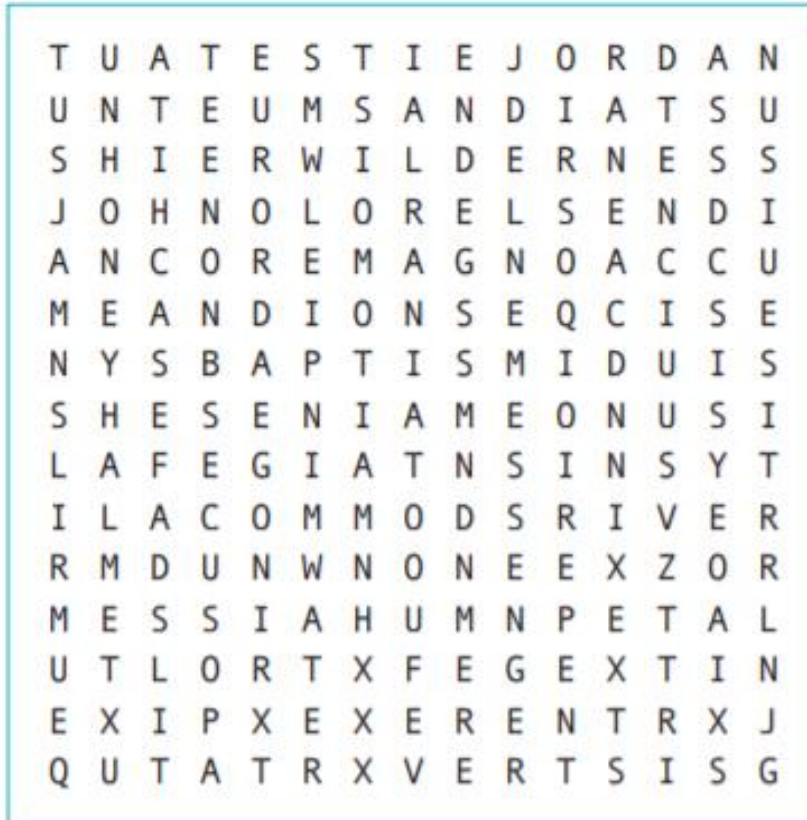
*Alan Jenkins*

**All Age Activity:** have a go at this Word Search

Or read [or get someone to read to you] a description of John the Baptist  
Then grab paper and pens and draw a picture of him [don't forget the locusts too

### John the Baptist Word Search

Find the words on the list that are hidden in the puzzle. The words can be right to left, up and down, or diagonally.



- |         |           |         |            |
|---------|-----------|---------|------------|
| BAPTISM | JORDAN    | MESSIAH | SINS       |
| HONEY   | LOCUST    | REPENT  | WATER      |
| JOHN    | MESSENGER | RIVER   | WILDERNESS |