

**Sunday 11 December 2022**

# The Third Sunday of Advent



**Sermon** © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

**Liturgy** © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

**Prayers of intercession** © Subversive Undercroft.

**Bible readings** © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

All the hymns are hosted on YouTube. Please click on the links to hear them.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

**HYMN 1** [As with gladness men of old](#) (click on this link to hear the hymn)

## The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

## The Preparation

**All Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

When the Lord comes he will bring to light things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.

Therefore, in the light of Christ,

let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,  
firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments  
and to live in love and peace with all.

**All** Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen.

**The Gloria** The Gloria is usually omitted in Advent

### **The Collect for the Third Sunday of Advent**

O Lord Jesus Christ,  
who at your first coming sent your messenger  
to prepare your way before you:  
grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries  
may likewise so prepare and make ready your way  
by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,  
that at your second coming to judge the world  
we may be found an acceptable people in your sight;  
for you are alive and reign with the Father  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**All** Amen.

**First reading**

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
'Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;

the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not travel on it,  
but it shall be for God's people;  
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.

No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,

but the redeemed shall walk there.  
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. *Isaiah 35:1-10*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans

Be patient, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. *James 5:7-10*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 In dulci jubilo**  
**Wexford carol**

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

## Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

When John [the Baptist] heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft

robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way before you.”

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.’ *Matthew 11:2–11*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

We are in the season of Advent. During Advent, we look ahead, preparing to meet with Jesus. That encounter with Jesus occurs in two ways, both looking forward to meeting a small new-born baby, weak and swaddled in a manger; but also preparing to meet him when he comes again at the second coming when he will appear in power as both judge and as King.

Christians are meant called to follow Jesus, therefore they need to meet him. Looking for Jesus is a huge subject, so the church helpful subdivides the weeks of Advent into themes—‘modes of looking’, if you like. It’s become traditional that the four weeks of Advent we look at forerunners, those who help us look forward to our meeting. The theme of the first week is ‘the people of God’, so we can see him in other people. Second is John the Baptist, who tells us to repent and be baptised. The third is the prophets in general, and the fourth is Mary the mother of Jesus.

So today, the Third Sunday of Advent, we will talk about the prophets. Prophecy means listening to God, being inspired by God the Holy Spirit in order to utter words that come from the very throne-room of God. God tells us to prepare for future encounters with Himself, so prophecy will convey overtones of telling the future, otherwise how do we know when and what we are looking for? Unfortunately, for many people ‘prophecy’ means foretelling the future but little else. In fact, a genuine prophet speaks two kinds of message: there are elements of ‘foretelling’ but also ‘forthtelling’. Let me explain.

The first role of a prophet is to foresee and thence explain the future. There is something of that aspect in most of the Old Testament prophets: God would send a future Prophet like Moses, so someone who will give commandments and lead God’s people to freedom; Jesus would be born in the City of David, so Bethlehem; he would die a grisly death; he would somehow make God available to us, and so on. The words of these prophets can be taken to look forward (remember the prophets wrote and spoke long before Jesus was born) but also looking backwards (because



today we read their words after centuries of hindsight). But the prophecy of foretelling always causes us to look toward God and usually toward God the Son. Anyone calling themselves a prophet and who asks us to look principally at them is not a true prophet. We are to look *through* the prophet, far beyond them toward God—so true prophecy is somehow sacramental.

A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. In any sacramental sense, then, a prophet says something (words, signs, and so forth) but we somehow see God through them. Think of Jesus walking beside the disciples on the road to Emmaus: he spoke and they felt their hearts burning within them. Or John Wesley attending a preaching meeting and his heart was ‘strangely warmed’. Prophecy is more than mere activity. It aims to evoke good.

The second role of a prophet is forthtelling, which is very different. It describes the character of God and therefore tells us what God does and does not want. Here the message is simple. We simply need to listen to them. Listen first to Isaiah, ‘“Comfort, comfort my people” says the Lord’ and Hosea. ‘“I do not desire sacrifice but mercy”, says the Lord’. Or Moses, ‘God says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength’’. That’s why the prophets tell us to be holy as God is holy; they tell us repeatedly to treat people in ways that speak of love and of goodness and of equality and of righteousness. That’s why we battle evil in self and must work against the rich and support the poor and needy.

As we take these twin roles of looking to find God and working for the Kingdom, I hope we note how they intersect most perfectly in the person of Jesus. That’s why ‘the prophets’ became one of our Advent themes. Taken together, the consequence of these two modes of prophetic utterance become inescapable: we must look for Jesus and must comfort His people. As a means to that end, we work toward the Kingdom. And that’s why working for the Kingdom makes Jesus visible because he is acting in and through us.

These themes remain as relevant today as they were when the Old- and New Testaments were written, because people still need love and comfort. Retail barons still seek to make money out of the poor and work against the Kingdom of God. The prophets railed against that sort of behaviour then and modern prophets do so today. And we are called to follow Jesus and be prophets in this mould.

When Jesus returns as Judge and as King, the principal criterion of his judgement will be this: to what extent do we live our lives in conscious imitation of Jesus. In the same way, to what extent do we live our lives deliberately seeking to discern evil and counter it, to work against corruption and wickedness, serving those who suffer the effects of the powerful working against common people?

We must therefore know what God is saying so that when he does return he will find us active in his service.

## The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
the source of all being and life,  
the one for whom we exist?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
who took our human nature,  
died for us and rose again?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God  
and makes Christ known in the world?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.**

**We believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**

## Prayers of intercession

The voice of God cries out in the wilderness, calling us to a transformed way of living. Let us respond to this invitation through the offering of our prayers.

Come to us, Holy Comforter, with your promise to bring a new heaven and a new earth to your people, saving us from the fires of sin and despair, and offering to us the solemn gifts of grace and salvation.

**All Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come into the hearts of your people, that we may turn from our selfish consumption of fossil fuels, our waste of food and clothing, our recklessness with money, and our carelessness with the gifts of creation.

**All Come, Lord Jesus.**



Come into the body of the Church and make us a baptising community, that multitudes may hear your message of repentance and hope, and receive your free gift of eternal love.

**All**    **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come with your Holy Spirit, into the hearts of those who are unemployed, abused, poorly educated, and who are persecuted for their faith, and awaken hope.

**All**    **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to young people everywhere, that they may have a desire to study your commandments and to exercise ministry in the world outside the Church

**All**    **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to those with power, and to all who exercise offices of authority; that wisdom may be their guide, and that true love of their people may direct their decisions.

**All**    **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to those we love but see no more and gather them into your heavenly rest.

**All**    **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Merciful Father,

**All**    **accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

## **The peace**

May the God of peace make you completely holy, ready for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All**    **And also with you.**

**HYMN 3**    **Maranatha**

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## The Dismissal

May God himself, the God of peace,  
make you perfect and holy,  
and keep you safe and blameless, in spirit, soul and body,  
for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
and the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you now and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

**HYMN 4 Longing for light**

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## The Liturgy of the Sacrament

### Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

Father, you made the world and love your creation.  
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.  
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.  
And so we gladly thank you,  
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and as we obey his command,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.  
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## **Breaking of the Bread**

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All** We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

### **Prayer after Communion**

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts;  
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit  
that when your Christ comes again  
we may shine as lights before his face;  
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.

**All** Amen

**All** Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work  
to your praise and glory.  
Amen.