

Sunday 25 December 2022

Christmas Day



Sermon © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy and prayers of intercession © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

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 In the bleak midwinter (please 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.

Hear the words of the angel to Joseph:

‘You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’

Let us therefore seek the forgiveness of God through Jesus the Saviour of the world.

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

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for Christmas Day

Almighty God,
you have given us your only-begotten Son
to take our nature upon him
and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin:
grant that we, who have been born again
and made your children by adoption and grace,
may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
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 Jeremiah

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. *Jeremiah 31:31-34*

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to **us by a Son, whom he appointed** heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **having become as much superior** to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. *Hebrews 1:1-12*

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 The Calypso Carol

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

Glory to you O Lord.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. *John 1:1-14*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you O Christ

Sermon

A young child went to bed. It was dark, and the faint light cast amazing shadows on the ceiling of her room. ‘Mum ...’ her voice travelled downstairs. ‘It’s dark and I’m lonely!’ Her mother knew the scene well, so she merely shouted upstairs, ‘You’ve got teddy! Now go to sleep.’

The child persisted. ‘Teddy is not real.’ It had been a hard day for Mum, and she was exasperated. ‘You have God with you’ she shouted up the stairs, ‘Now go to sleep.’ But the child was insistent, ‘But mum ... *I want someone who I can hold on to.*’

How like us. Since the dawn of time, people have wanted a God they can somehow see and hear, a God they can talk with and understand. A God they can hold on to. It’s a theme throughout most of the Old Testament section of the Bible. That’s surely what the previous reading, from the letter to the Hebrews was all about: ‘Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets.’

And God spoke in many and various ways because the people at the time either weren’t satisfied with what they heard about God, or simply misunderstood. Think of the ghastly things some of the earlier prophets said about God: that he was a God of vengeance, or was a God who was always angry. That he was a God who delighted in genocide and killing and blood. This is not a pleasant God. This is not a God who is even worth following. By no stretch of the imagination is this God the sort *anyone* would want to hold on to.

Desperate situations require desperate remedies. I think it’s clear that God always wanted humankind to know him. That’s why he persisted in these many and various ways with his prophets. He finally gave up on that idea—of speaking through people (the prophets)—it was somehow too indirect. It worked up to a point, but frankly no further.

So God decided to come to earth in person. So far, so good. God wanted us to know that he was genuinely human, as well as genuinely God. So he decided to come to earth in a straightforward, human way: he was not going to be superman, flying through the air with his underpants outside his suit. Why listen to someone—or *something*—who has no idea what it’s like to be a human? There is no point in it, because when the superhero says, ‘God wants you to do such and such ...’ we’d simply say, ‘well it’s easy for *you* ... but what about *us*?’

When God came to earth, it was as a human being, pure and simple, and without question. In other words, God’s grand plan needed God to come as a real human, in real time, with real parents and with a real life in a real country, with real problems and with a real death. In other words, he came as one of us. But through it all, he is still God: as the author of the epistle says, he was ‘the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being.’ And it’s him that God wants us to hold on to.

So that's what God did. And that's exactly who Jesus was and is. In this way, one of the greatest of the prophecies of the Old Testament could finally start to come true. The prophet Jeremiah said, in chapter 31 and verse 34 of the book named after him, 'People will no longer need to teach their neighbours, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know God.'" For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already. And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.'

That last bit about sins is a natural consequence, and is vitally important: if we don't know God, then how on earth can we know what God is like? And if we don't know what God is like, how can we know what he wants of us? Clearly, we can't. But here is the crucial message of Christmas: because we *can* know God — through his human son Jesus—we *can* know what we *are* meant to be like, and what we are meant to *do*. So by looking closely at the life of Jesus and trying to mirror it, we too can know what God is like. And hold on to him.

Over the coming few days, all of us will be singing our favourite carols. One of my favourites is *O little town of Bethlehem*. Near its end comes the important line, a prayer that asks God to 'cast out our sin and enter in: be born in us today.' *That* is the message of Christmas expressed by a hymn writer. One of the earliest Christian writers expressed the same truth in slightly different words, 'God became a human that we might share his divinity.' In other words, we can know right from wrong, enter into a relationship with God, and thereby experience eternal life. Now that *is* a God worth hanging on to.

A child went to bed one night, and wanted a tangible presence: someone to hold on to. In the dark, the child cried out, 'Mummy, I want a God I can hold on to.' The child is like us, in a dark world, with dark fears in our lives and with dark pressures and dark people around,' we too need a God we can hold on to.

And, praise God, we have one—Jesus who is born afresh tonight. Let us hold on to him, and with great joy.

The Creed

This version of the Creed is sung to the tune of 'God rest ye merry gentlemen'. Please click [here](#) for the tune.

**We sing the faith of Holy Church,
The fam'ly of the Lord
Made one by God in Jesus Christ,
By earth and heaven adored:
The Father who has all things made
And on us blessings poured:**

O Lord, we love you and believe, and believe!

O Lord, we love you and believe!

The angel to the Virgin came

Announcing the Lord's birth

As Jesus Christ, pure Mary's son,

To save the fallen earth.

He lived, and on the cross he died—

Love spent beyond all worth: Refrain

On the third day he rose again

As by the Scriptures told;

Then into heaven glorified:

Th'eternal shepherd's fold.

And he shall come at end of time

To start the age of gold: Refrain

The Spirit's life fills all the world

With healing gifts and power.

We are the Church, the first saints' heirs,

Where fellowship must flower.

Forgiven sins—Christ's risen life

That frees us from death's hour: Refrain

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray to Jesus our Saviour.

Christ, born in a stable,

give courage to all who are homeless.

Jesus, Saviour,

All hear our prayer.

Christ, for whom the angels sang,

give the song of the kingdom to all who weep.

Jesus, Saviour,

All hear our prayer.

Christ, worshipped by the shepherds,

give peace on earth to all who are oppressed.

Jesus, Saviour,

All hear our prayer.

Christ, before whom the wise men knelt,
give humility and wisdom to all who govern.

Jesus, Saviour,

All hear our prayer.

Christ, whose radiance filled a lowly manger,
give the glory of your resurrection to all who rest in you.

Jesus, Saviour,

All hear our prayer.

Jesus, Saviour, child of Mary,

you know us and love us,

you share our lives

and hear our prayer.

Glory to you for ever.

All Amen.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Away in a manger

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May the joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ-child
be yours this Christmas;
and the blessing.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 [The Angel Gabriel from Heaven came](#) (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.

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere,
mighty creator, ever-living God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who for love of our fallen race humbled himself,
and was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of your Spirit,
and lived as one of us.

In this mystery of the Word made flesh
you have caused his light to shine in our hearts,
to give knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
In him we see our God made visible
and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see.
Therefore with all the angels of heaven
we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name
and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

**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

God of truth,
whose Wisdom set her table
and invited us to eat the bread and drink the wine
of the kingdom:
help us to lay aside all foolishness
and to live and walk in the way of insight,
that we may come with your servant Bernard
to the eternal feast of heaven;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.