

Sunday 3 December 2023

Advent Sunday



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 O come, O come, Emmanuel (traditional version)
O come, O come, Emmanuel (version by Enya)
O come, O come, Emmanuel (more contemporary version)

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 It is usual to omit the Gloria during Advent

The Collect for the Advent Sunday

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him 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 Isaiah

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people. *Isaiah 64:1–9*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *1 Corinthians 1:3–9*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 **Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!** (click on this link to hear the hymn)
‘Maranatha’ is Aramaic for ‘Come, Our Lord!’

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus said, ‘In those days, after that suffering,

“The sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.”

‘Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

‘From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

‘But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.’

Mark 13:24–37

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

Advent is a time of preparation: we used to call it 'lesser Lent'—we are to fast, to pray, to think. In short, we employ all the necessary methods of preparation.

In Advent we look in several directions at once: first, we look backwards at the birth of Our Lord and Saviour as a human—we call it 'The Incarnation'—when he was born as a mortal being in a stable. But today, the First Sunday of Advent, we also look forward, as did the prophets, to Christ coming in glory. And that's all part of the Advent preparation: *we prepare to meet with Jesus*.

The **first** way in which we meet with Jesus is an explicit meeting, at the end of time, whether that's the end of recorded time when Christ is seen to fill the sky, or at the end of our earthly time, if it occurs sooner—a customised encounter. This, perhaps, is the encounter foretold by the prophets. In this encounter, we meet with Christ as God the Son, as Lord, as judge. It will be a time of dread as well as glory; it will be a time when we see him as he truly is—perhaps for the first time. And, I am now convinced, it will also be a time when we see ourselves objectively for the very first time. In the presence of the living Lord Jesus, all the pretence and all the show is seen for what it is and we are, as it were, naked before him. He sees what we truly are (we also see what for true) and he acts appropriately. He sits on the throne of a judge and judges us then decides our eternal fate. So, the first aspect of Advent preparation is to ensure that his decision is the one we want.

At this point, we need to note that he is a perfect judge: he won't make the wrong decisions nor will he allow excuses. The sentence will be just, based on what we did and who we were while alive on earth. The first role of advent preparation becomes to do what we are told, and to access how we can make our election sure. Be warned it will involve peace of mind and wonder. And it may cause great love.

The **second** way in which we meet with Jesus is in others. Our Gospel reading is explicit: often, we meet people—whether they are a tramp or a saint doesn't really matter—and they are to be taken as Christ's representatives. We are to treat them as though they were Christ. Clearly, this does not mean we fall on our knees and worship them. But it does mean that every person we meet is made in the very likeness of God, has the capability to be the image of God: pure and holy and clean. We see the inner person not the outer dirt and respond to the increment of God Almighty who has deigned to live within the person. There is a story of St Martin, one of the first bishops in France. He was a Roman soldier and one saw a beggar, close to death through hunger and cold. Martin fed him his own meagre rations, and gave the beggar half of his own thick, Roman cloak. That night he had a dream and saw Jesus in majesty in Heaven. But he was dirty, scrawny because he had not

eaten properly, and he was wearing Martin's cloak. It was the beggar. Martin had fed Christ; he had clothed Christ; he had shown love and compassion to Christ; and that is one reason why he is still remembered as a great saint.

The parable in our Gospel this morning is clear: our choice behind our actions makes a difference. We can be judged for what we do to others just as much as what we do alone. So the second thread of Advent preparation is looking at how we treat people, asking a barrage of difficult and painful questions—do we love sacrificially, do we love the unlovable? Do we visit those in prison, or their moral equivalents, campaign for those unjustly imprisoned in Burma, Africa, Saudi Arabia, or whichever organisations like *Amnesty International* discern there to be such affronts to justice. This Gospel is a hard Gospel. A costly Gospel, and a Gospel that will bring us into conflict—increasingly with our own Government and the authorities in other countries. But our time of Advent preparation will help us decide, do we listen to God first, or do we listen to our own desire for a quiet life, and who cares what happens to the poor, the oppressed and the hungry. Be warned it will involve love, and it will involve joy, peace, and the fruit of the Spirit.

And the **third** way we meet with Christ is more immediate still and more personal still. The call of the Gospel is to be Christ-like. We are to be a host to Christ. He is to live inside us, as though our bodies and our lives no longer belong to us. We are a host to him, and no more. This Christlikeness is a *requirement* placed on every Christian for Jesus himself said, as a commandment, 'Be perfect as my Father in Heaven is perfect,' says Jesus. 'Follow me,' 'I am the way—no-one comes to the Father except by me,' says Jesus This Jesus does make hard demands. And one of them is that our lives are no longer ours: 'unless a grain of wheat fall to the ground, it will never bear fruit.' This is the goal and this is the reason for the Christian life. Without this end, there is no point in even considering the means. This, then, is the Christian life and be warned: if done properly, it will instil comfort and purpose, and again very great love.

Today is the first day of Advent. It's a time of preparation, when we decide who we are in the faith. It's a time when we look back at the first Christmas, when God came to earth as a human. And it's a time when we realise, maybe with dread, that we will have to meet with Christ. We will meet him at the end of time, whether at the end of the world or the end of our time is immaterial. And he will judge us. We will meet him when we meet with people, and often the most unlikely people—the poor, the smelly, the destitute as well as the saints. And we meet him when he deigns for his majesty to leave Heaven and reside inside us, as we start the long, costly but ultimately satisfying road toward Christlikeness.

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 bidding word 'Maranatha' in each prayer is Aramaic for 'Come, Our Lord!'

In joyful expectation of his coming to our aid
we pray to Jesus.

Come to your Church as Lord and judge.

We pray for ...

Help us to live in the light of your coming and give us a longing for your kingdom.

Maranatha:

All Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to your world as King of the nations.

We pray for ...

Before you rulers will stand in silence.

Maranatha:

All Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to the suffering as Saviour and comforter.

We pray for ...

Break into our lives,
where we struggle with sickness and distress,
and set us free to serve you for ever.

Maranatha:

All Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to us as shepherd and guardian of our souls.

We remember ...

Give us with all the faithful departed a share in your victory over evil and death.

Maranatha:

All Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come from heaven, Lord Jesus, with power and great glory.

Lift us up to meet you,
that with all your saints and angels
we may live and reign with you in your new creation.

Maranatha:

All Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus, do not delay;
give new courage to your people,
who trust in your love.

By your coming, raise us to share in the joy of your kingdom
on earth as in heaven,
where you live and reign with the Father and the Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

All Amen.

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** (different song: please click on this link to hear the hymn)
'Maranatha' is Aramaic for 'Come, Our Lord!'

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 **Come thou long-expected Jesus** (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

O Lord our God,
make us watchful and keep us faithful
as we await the coming of your Son our Lord;
that, when he shall appear,
he may not find us sleeping in sin
but active in his service
and joyful in his praise;
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.**