

Sunday 10 December 2023

The Second Sunday of Advent



Sermon © the Revd Robin Wilding.

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 [Lo he comes with clouds descending](#) (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 We usually omit the Gloria during Advent

The Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power
and come among us,
and with great might succour 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.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.' A voice says, 'Cry out!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?' All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep. *Isaiah 40:1-11*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Second Letter of St Peter

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day.

The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the

coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, *2 Peter 3:8-15*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Ubi caritas

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

All Glory to you O Lord.

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight”,’

John the baptiser appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.’ *Mark 1:1-8*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

For 400 years there had been no prophet in Israel, no voice direct from God, no guidance. But there was an expectation that before the coming of God's Kingdom there would be a voice crying in the wilderness, a figure either like Elijah or Elijah himself (the greatest remembered prophet).

A voice crying out

And now one appears. Out in the Jordan valley a figure comes that causes a storm of interest and crowds come out to hear this new voice from God. Like Elijah he comes in ordinary if not poor dress and eats the food of a poor man. Not distinguished in dress or appearance. Not setting himself up in fancy surroundings or among the wealthy and significant. And he certainly doesn't affirm or agree with the leaders of the people.

John the Baptist is a great Jewish hero, with a message of hope to a conquered people, popular and sought after. Yet he is totally eclipsed in our thinking by the One who comes after him.

The Kingdom of God is near.

A voice that speaks to the powerful

Like Elijah, John is not afraid of challenging the powerful. For Elijah his spiritual enemies were the prophets of Baal, and his political one's Ahab and Jezebel.

In Matthew's record we hear what John thought of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. Out they come with the crowds to experience and critique what John is saying. Coming in their finery and in pride at their own status and learning. 'You brood of vipers!' We can imagine how they were behaving from the many examples of them trying to trip Jesus up with trick questions. He has none of this and indeed his message has no place for the status quo, for those who would hold people to keeping the law or the rituals.

He also has no time for Herod and his family. Those who lead the people but are not truly of the people of God. Like Ahab and Jezebel they bring foreign religion to bear and behave abominably. You could say John lost his head over it but he never lost his sense of God's truth and the need for a prophet to challenge the powerful.

A voice that turned spiritual understanding upside down

What was so radical and shocking about the message John brought? What shook people was the call of John to not rely on being born Jewish. The natural understanding was—I am a Jew therefore I'm part of God's people and his future plans. His call was that to truly be part of God's people you've got to commit in and the mark of this was repentance demonstrated by submitting to baptism. This was radical and shocking—apart from the different category of ceremonial washing the

main use of baptism was to welcome Gentiles who wanted to become Jews into the people, baptism as a border between the past and the future, between what I was and what I am now. So I was outside God's people now I am inside.

And the crowds rush to commit, to belong, to become. But all the time John is saying that this is not all, there is more to come indeed there is One to come who is so far greater than himself that you'd never believe it without seeing. And Jesus comes.

Lessons for us

Being born into a Christian nation/Christian family means nothing without SURRENDERING to God's call

Being sorry is not enough: we are called to COMMIT our lives to God's Kingdom. But above all, more than any ritual or choice we need desperately to MEET WITH JESUS and receive the blessing of his presence and life by the Spirit.

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

Watchful at all times,

let us pray for strength to stand with confidence
before our Maker and Redeemer.

That God may bring in his kingdom with justice and mercy,
let us pray to the Lord:

All Lord, have mercy.

That God may establish among the nations
his sceptre of righteousness,
let us pray to the Lord:

All Lord, have mercy.

That we may seek Christ in the Scriptures
and recognise him in the breaking of the bread,
let us pray to the Lord:

All Lord, have mercy.

That God may bind up the broken-hearted,
restore the sick
and raise up all who have fallen,
let us pray to the Lord:

All Lord, have mercy.

That the light of God's coming may dawn
on all who live in darkness and the shadow of death,
let us pray to the Lord:

All Lord, have mercy.

That, with all the saints in light,
we may shine forth as lights for the world,
let us pray to the Lord:

All Lord, have mercy.

Silence is kept.

Almighty God,
as your blessed Son Jesus Christ
first came to seek and to save the lost;
so may he come again to find in us
the completion of his redeeming work;
for he is now alive
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

All Amen.

We commend ourselves and all for whom we pray
to the mercy and protection of our heavenly Father:

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 [Advent: soon and very soon](#) (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 [Christ whose glory fills the skies](#) (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

Father in heaven,
who sent your Son to redeem the world
and will send him again to be our judge:
give us grace so to imitate him
in the humility and purity of his first coming
that, when he comes again,
we may be ready to greet him
with joyful love and firm faith;
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.