

Sunday 24 December 2023

The Fourth Sunday of Advent



Sermon © Lucie Reilly.

Prayers of intercession © Priests for Life.

Liturgy © 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.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,
<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 [Infant holy, infant lowly](#)

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

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 It is usual to omit the Gloria during Advent

The Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

God our redeemer,
who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of your Son:
grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour,
so we may be ready to greet him
when he comes again as our judge;
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 Second Book of Samuel

When [King David] was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.' Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you.'

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: 'Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord, "Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?' Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house."

'Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.'

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Romans 16:25-27

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [In dulci jubilo](#)[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.'

Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her. *Luke 1:26-38*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

May I speak in the name of our living god who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. An angel is literally a messenger, and this angel, Gabriel was sent by God to Mary with a message, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, Jesus. God will give him the throne of David, he will reign over the house of Jacob and his kingdom will have no end... wow that is good news right... well for us listening to the story now yes, this is the news we long for, even if we don't always know it, this is the

answer to all our prayers. This is what we've been waiting for, this is the news of Jesus, the one who saves, he is Emmanuel, God with us, the fulfilment of all God's promises. The one who makes God known and enables us to share in God's kingdom. The one who will lift up the lowly, feed the poor, comfort those who mourn, confront injustice, stand up to the abuse of power, heal the sick, raise the dead. The one who wipes away the consequence of our sin and brings life in all its fullness and offers us the hope of eternity.

Jesus ... this is the news of Jesus, the one, who is 'good news'.

I'm not sure, though, that the announcement of the birth of this child felt, at the time like good news to Mary. Mary, we're told was perplexed and afraid and unsure, this was unsettling and overwhelming. This news was going to lead to all kinds of trouble, her fiancé would look to break their engagement, she'd have to give birth far away from home, she'd become a refugee to keep this child safe, she'd struggle to adjust to the fulfilment of his calling, she would be scorned by her community, brought into conflict with her other children, she would see this child betrayed, tortured and executed. He would be the cause of her very soul pierced with grief. But, we discover that her faith, Mary's incredible faith was generous, she accepted the extraordinary call of God on what was her actually very ordinary life. The hope of Israel found its place in her courage. Mary's love of God made flesh in her was truly life-giving, because it turned out that Jesus coming was 'good news'. It was good news for her fiancé Joseph, who discovered his own vocation in it. It was good news for Elizabeth, who found the peace and confirmation she needed to face her own belated parenthood. It was good news for the isolated, excluded shepherds who found comfort and joy in it. It was good news for the educated, privileged Wise Men, who discovered greater purpose and the focus for the right use of all their resources. Jesus coming was good news for fishermen, tax collectors, and royal officials, for soldiers and judges and priests, for widows and businesswomen, and sex workers. Jesus was good news for Israel, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Well, I'm not sure about good news this year: there seems to have been a great deal of bad news, we have observed unthinkable war and violence. Seen poverty and social inequality sore. Inflation went through the roof causing us to struggle to make ends meet and feed our families. We have been overstretched and become weary and despondent and viewed from here, in the midst of a rainy December, this year seems dark and dismal.

So, I pray today that the news of the coming of Christ is good news for us. I pray we find comfort and joy in this Christmas, the message to Mary was good news and God's message to us echoes that which Mary brought... Jesus is good news for all.

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to Mary and he came to her and said greetings favoured one the lord is with you. Hearing the message asks of us what was asked of Mary will you bear Jesus for the world? Will you share the faith, hope and love you have found in him in the midst of this uncertainty, anxiety and fear? Will you, like Mary say here am I, the servant of the Lord and become the bearer of good news for all? When we say yes to that, we bear good news in the witness of our lives every day and everywhere. We do that in the faithfulness of our prayer and worship as we're moulded lifelong by the grace of scripture and the sacrament. We do that in our love for one another even, perhaps especially in our disagreements. By the gentle work of the spirit in us and among us we do that by our sacrificial service of the poor, the lonely, the hungry, the outcast, in our care for the vulnerable, in our determination to tackle injustice, in our grateful stewardship of creation, we do that by being rooted in Christ Jesus and shaped by him. By becoming humbler, simpler and bolder for his sake, like Mary we have been given this message the saviour of the world is coming, and we too are called to bear it in our lives, the one who is good news for all.

This Christmas Eve, let us pray, Heavenly Father who chose the blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised Saviour, fill us your servants with your grace that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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

As we approach the celebration of the birth of our Saviour, let us turn our hearts and minds to the Father, with confidence in his generous love and mercy:

That the Church will faithfully proclaim the Word of God to every part of the world, we pray to the Lord ...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

That Government leaders will be responsive to the needs of their people, especially families with young children, we pray to the Lord...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

That all who are pregnant and afraid may welcome the life within them, and draw strength from the angel Gabriel's words to Mary: Do not fear, we pray to the Lord ...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

That the poor, the lonely, and the neglected will experience God's love during this joyful season through the kindness of others, we pray to the Lord ...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

That all who are busy making preparations to celebrate Christmas will take time to reflect on God's love for them, we pray to the Lord ...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

For those who have died, that as they shared our Christmas joy on earth, they may come to enjoy eternal glory in God's kingdom, we pray to the Lord ...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

Almighty God, prepare our hearts with your grace, that like Mary, we may be a worthy dwelling place for your Son. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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 The rocking carol

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

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May God the Father, judge all-merciful,
make us worthy of a place in his kingdom.

May God the Son, coming among us in power,
reveal in our midst the promise of his glory.

May God the Holy Spirit make us steadfast in faith,
joyful in hope and constant in love

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 The angel Gabriel came down

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

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

Heavenly Father,
who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of the promised saviour:
fill us your servants with your grace,
that in all things we may embrace your holy will
and with her rejoice in your salvation;
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.