

Monday 25 December 2023

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

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

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 Isaiah

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,

you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onwards and for evermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.. *Isaiah 9:2-7*

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to Titus

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds. *Titus 2:11-14*

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

Glory to you O Lord.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.'

Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

Luke 2:1-14

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you O Christ

Sermon

I'm going to tell you a story. It occurred a few years ago—indeed, more years than I care to remember. It was a Christmas Eve I recall, and I was just going to bed. Suddenly, I heard a noise outside, or at least I thought I did. So I went outside and saw a figure all in red sitting on the back doorstep. It was Santa. He sat immobile with his head in his hands. He was obviously upset, and kept repeating the phrase, 'Tell the children.' He said it over and over again as thought to himself.

I sat next to Santa, and put an arm around him. After I'd calmed him a little, I asked him what he meant. By way of a reply, he offered me the open sack at his feet. 'Tell the children', were his only words.

I put my hand in the sack and drew out a slim candle. It was of simple design and not displaying any particular elegance. The wick was straight and unused. 'Tell the children', insisted Santa.

'Tell them what?' I asked. 'It's a candle.'

'Tell the children,' said Santa. 'Tell the children that this and every candle are given to remind us that at the first Christmas, Jesus came into the world ... the same Jesus who is the light of the world. In a dark place, we instinctively look for alight, because we are prone to fall over in the blackness or hurt ourselves or be led astray. But when we see a light, we follow it and reach safety. We are made that way. In just the same way, in this dark world (which is so characterised by sin and spiritual darkness), we are to follow Jesus who is the light of the world. If we follow him to the very end, we will never be led astray but will, rather, find our way to heaven. Tell the children that is why Christmas is characterised by lights and candles. Tell the children of this. Tell the children.' And I promised that I would.

Santa was still clearly moved. He stopped speaking and put his head in his hands again. I'm sure I heard him mutter 'Tell the children', again.

Suddenly, Santa sat up straight, and I realised he was offering me his sack once more. I pulled out a simple Christmas card. 'Tell the children', said Santa.

'Tell them what?' I asked him, the card still in my hand. 'What shall I say about this card?'

'Tell the children,' Santa said. 'Tell the children that Christmas cards like this one are given to remind everyone that at the first Christmas, God was sending a message of love to us, the human race. Each time we send a card, we are saying something of that love for we have remembered to give a message of hope to someone close to us. Each time we send a card, we are offering a message of love (maybe explicit; certainly implicit). The mere fact that we are sending cards is an advertisement, a sign, at the least an *indication*, that we are offering love. And each card reminds us of that wonderful display of love, when Jesus sent Jesus into the world. Tell the children of this. Tell the children.' And I promised that I would.

I could tell that Santa was feeling somewhat better. This time, I dared to look directly at his sack. Seeing my glance, he said, 'Yes, take it,' and opened its neck. I

pulled out a small present. It was neatly wrapped in crisp, crimson paper. It was very beautiful. 'Tell the children' Santa said.

'Tell them what?' I asked him, the present held tightly in my hand. 'What shall I say about this present?'

'Tell the children,' Santa said. 'Tell the children that presents at Christmas remind us of the best present ever given. Christmas presents tell us of God's gift of the Christ child: all those years ago, God gave Jesus to sinful humankind. The present in your hand reminds us that Jesus was not merely a child but also a gift from God. After his birth, Jesus lived a sinless life and died to remove our sins. Because of Jesus birth we, too, can be sinless. Because of the gift of Jesus, we can enter into a wondrous relationship with God, the barrier of sin and death is utterly removed. So this Jesus was the best gift ever! Tell the children of this. Tell the children', he said; and I promised that I would.

A short time later, Santa left to go on his way; and I have never seen him since. But he must still be about because this Christmas, every time I see a merry candle flame, or the twinkling fairy lights on a tree, I seem to hear a voice in my head, reminding me to 'tell the children.' I am reminded again to tell them that Jesus was born at Christmas, the light of the world.

I also receive a large number of Christmas cards. Each time I open an envelope to find a card, I search for its inscription of love inside. And I remember that Jesus' birth was a message of love from God. Indeed, at every level, Jesus' coming to earth was a profound communication from God of his love.

And I will no doubt receive presents. Each time I receive a Christmas present, I will remember that Jesus is the best present ever, because his birth leads directly to my entering into the presence of God. What a gift!

And I also remember that I am to tell children of these things: of light and love and presents from God. So I do tell them, babies and young children, and all those who are still children at heart. I tell them all of these things, and of the night I saw Santa behind my home.

I tell the children all these things. Do you?

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 we believe!
O Lord, we love you and we 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 Come all ye faithful [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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.