



Sunday 6 December 2020

- All the Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration have been included at the end rather than in situ because many following the service will be in isolation and unable to celebrate the sacrament.
- The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.
- 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 (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.

A voice cries out in the wilderness,

‘Make straight the way of the Lord’.

So let us listen, and turn to the Lord 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.

It's usual to omit the Gloria during Advent.

The Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

Almighty God,
purify our hearts and minds,
that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as
judge and saviour
we may be ready to receive him,
who is our Lord and our God.

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

The central theme of Advent is waiting. We’re waiting to meet with Jesus. That encounter always has an element of past and future: Jesus has already come into the world as a tiny defenceless baby. We ponder that incarnation afresh in the days immediately before Christmas. But we also prepare our souls to meet him at the end of time when he returns as Lord and judge. We need to prepare because we’ll have to answer for how we responded to his first incarnation: he’ll judge us for the way we responded to the Gospel.

The scope of that responding is large, so the Church helpfully advises us to subdivide and ponder each facet in isolation. Last week—the first week of Advent—

our pondering centred round the idea of ‘the people of God’: how did we respond to the Gospel insofar as we met with people and looked for God in them. We’ll be judged by the way we loved the God in them. But did we even look? And if we did look, was our response to feed the hungry, cloth the naked or to protect the weak?

The theme for this week, the Second Week of Advent, is ‘The prophets’. As it’s Advent, we’re being asked to respond to the prophets through the dread lens of being judged by the God who sponsored the prophets, sending them to speak to us.

Like a barrister, Christ’s first question is intended to ascertain if we’re aware of the charges levelled against us: are we aware of the prophets: do we know *of* them? The problem is that if we say we didn’t know about them, then Christ our judge will respond with the obvious question, ‘What sort of disciple are we if we don’t make it our business to listen to God, listen to his appointed spokespeople, listen to his explicit message? Perhaps it’s safer to fess up and admit we do know about the prophets ... but God will then react, ‘Then why didn’t you listen and respond?’

The message of the prophets is actually very, very simple. We are to love God and we are to love our neighbour. We are to demonstrate that love in ways that show we want God and in ways that show we care about our neighbour. The words of today’s first reading convey the gentleness that typify their message:

‘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.’

At the second coming, Jesus will look at the ways we gave comfort, or forgave, or operated with tenderness. The talk of ‘grass withering’ implies we must bring comfort *now*. We may not have much time in which to forgive and show tenderness. God’s talk (through Isaiah) of ‘uneven ground becoming level’ is a poetic way of telling us to work toward equality: in proportion that we have privilege and power (and all of us do) we are to help the disadvantaged, the poor, and those without.

If that much is still too difficult to understand, the prophets give us worked examples—social situations together with textbook answers. For example, listen to God speaking to his disciples—us—through the prophet Isaiah (it’s chapter 58):

‘Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry

and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?’
(where the word ‘fasting’ here simply means ‘religious observance’, by the way: it means the way we choose to respond to God).

To summarise, we’re preparing to meet Jesus and remember his coming to us as a defenceless baby but also to prepare for when he returns as Lord and judge. The prophets forewarn us that a central plank of that judgement centres on the way we respond to the vulnerable and defenceless—that’s surely part of the reason he chose his first coming as a baby. They tell us how to respond, so we need to reflect, do we give comfort; do we forgive; are we gentle and tender? Do we seek to make the world better? Do we share? Do we seek the Prophets’ vision of justice equality and joy? In a word, ‘are we Christlike; do we seek the Kingdom of God?’

I’ll summarise using a different collect for today, the Second Sunday of Advent. It’s by Steven Shakespeare:

God of the keen blade,
which cuts the roots of arrogant power:
you raise voices of promise in the dry lands of our desire
children of faith from the stones of the earth;
make us ready to receive the Spirit and the fire of love,
wild and fierce and free;
through Jesus Christ, the one who is to come. 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

The voice of God cries out in the wilderness, calling us to a transformed way of living. Let us respond to this invitation through the offering of our prayers.

Come to us, Holy Comforter, with your promise to bring a new heaven and a new earth to your people, saving us from the fires of sin and despair, and offering to us the solemn gifts of grace and salvation.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come into the hearts of your people, that we may turn from our selfish consumption of fossil fuels, our waste of food and clothing, our recklessness with money, and our carelessness with the gifts of creation.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come into the body of the Church and make us a baptising community, that multitudes may hear your message of repentance and hope, and receive your free gift of eternal love.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come with your Holy Spirit, into the hearts of those who are unemployed, abused, poorly educated, and who are persecuted for their faith, and awaken hope.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to young people everywhere, that they may have a desire to study your commandments and to exercise ministry in the world outside the Church

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to those with power, and to all who exercise offices of authority; that wisdom may be their guide, and that true love of their people may direct their decisions.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to those we love but see no more, and gather them into your heavenly rest.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

In the tender mercy of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
to shine on those who dwell in darkness
and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,
All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Will you come and follow me ([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.

All Amen

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

All Amen

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

All Amen

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.