



Sunday 13 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 [Lo, he comes with clouds descending](#)

(please click on the link)

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 Third Sunday of Advent

God for whom we watch and wait,
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son:
give us courage to speak the truth,
to hunger for justice,
and to suffer for the cause of right,
with Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to

proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines; but you shall be called priests of the Lord, you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. Because their shame was double, and dishonour was proclaimed as their lot, therefore they shall possess a double portion; everlasting joy shall be theirs. For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. *Isaiah 61:1-11*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

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

But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. Beloved, pray for us. Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

1 Thessalonians 5:12–28

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 The Wexford carol

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me".') From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him,

'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord", as the prophet Isaiah said'. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptising if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptise with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.'

This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptising. *John 1:6-28*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Most of us are busy preparing for Christmas celebrations now. We want to gather with family and friends, within our bubble and feast, give gifts and remember the coming of Christ into the world 2,000 years ago.

As I get older, I notice how it feels that last year's Christmas celebration couldn't have been more than 6 months ago! But when we were children Christmas seemed to take a very long time to come around again, didn't it? It seems that when we are really looking forward to something the time just drags.

And God's people through the ages have felt that way about the coming of Christ. Now our first passage from Isaiah 61:1-4, and 8-11 is one of the first places in Scripture that the people are given new hope of their long-expected Messiah. This is the announcement of good tidings from God that the Old Testament prophet declares to the people.

Though everything has been distressful and the people have been downtrodden there is hope coming. He describes it as a *year* of the Lord's favour and also a *day* of vengeance. This reminds us that God has a constant attitude of favour and grace toward us and when judgment is necessary it is brief and swift.

The Spirit of the Lord promised someone was coming to bind up their wounds and proclaim liberty to the captives and give them beauty for ashes and the oil of gladness and a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness or depression.

Literally there would be comfort for every sad situation they were in. That's what we all want for Christmas, isn't it?

This was a prophecy concerning the birth of Jesus and the coming Messiah. But the people still had to wait over 400 years before their deliverer came on the scene. He was born in Bethlehem and took the same time as any normal boy to grow up.

And it wasn't until he was about thirty years old that Jesus began His public ministry by calling for the scroll of Isaiah and reading this very portion of scripture,

telling them that on this day that particular scripture was fulfilled before their eyes.

We know that Jesus went about healing and doing well and we know that when he left to return to glory He said we would do even greater things in his absence through the work of the Holy Spirit in us. So the Christian faith is marked by a joyful soul and a sense of faith and hope in the future no matter how dark the clouds of doubt appear. Miracles occur all around us in answer to prayers and the work of so many servants of God everywhere.

Our Gospel passage from John tells us that John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the Jews as their Promised One.

The four gospels are often referred to as synoptic because they tell the same stories of the life of Jesus from different points of view; John leaves out our famous Christmas nativity stories. He is more concerned that we know the grown-up Jesus is their long-awaited Messiah.

And in verse one he begins at the very beginning when Jesus was the WORD in the creation story and now the word of God has become flesh and dwelt among them. The hundreds of years of waiting are now over.

You see the Old Testament had revealed God's standard of righteousness in precept and principle, but now God was revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. The people had thought maybe John was the Christ since he had been baptizing people. They sent a committee of leaders to ask who he was. They asked if he was Elijah or the prophet who was predicted to come in the Spirit of Moses.

(I think it is interesting to note here that they were expecting these two to return to earth again and they actually did return with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration!)

So the scribes and Pharisees were familiar with prophecies but mixed up on the signs and the timing. That's easy for all of us to do. The scriptures give us many clues that are cloaked in mystery now but will become easy to see AFTER they happen. But we are to believe and be prepared for what the Lord has promised.

John the Baptist said he was not the Christ, nor any of the men they thought he might be, but he was appointed by God as a witness to the one who was the true light of the world.

I read a story about a father with three sons and he tried an interesting experiment with them. He said he would give his entire inheritance to the one who could fill a room completely with something they could buy for only a few dollars. The first son bought feathers but was not able to completely fill the room with them because they kept on packing down. The second son tried straw but found it was taking a lot of money and the room was still not filled. The third son bought one candle and a match and lit the candle and filled the room with light!

Jesus is the light which shines in the darkness of our world He gives us security in this life and in the life to come.

When John explained his purpose he quoted Isaiah saying they should make the paths straight to prepare for the way of the Lord.

Everything and everyone needs straightening up to prepare for the Lord's coming. Just think how much preparation we make for company coming at Christmas and at other times! We must prepare our HEARTS for Christ to come in and abide with us. Now we know that life is hard and it doesn't always turn out like a television movie, does it? Nope, aging isn't always easy but no amount of suffering can prohibit the kind of joy the Bible tells us is given to us by the Holy Spirit.

We have the oil of gladness that comes to our battle-weary souls as we discover that through it all God is faithful. We know that what we see here and now is not all there is and doom is not our destiny. We don't know what the future holds but we know WHO holds our future.

In our New Testament reading from Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians we are told how to live in expectant faith until the final coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul is coming to the end of his first letter to the Thessalonians and he pens a string of advice in short sentences kind of like a mother when she sends her child off to university. (You know, like, 'be careful, don't walk on campus alone at night, study hard, take your vitamins, call us often'... etc.).

Paul writes that we know that God is doing His job and our job is to: rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances. We shouldn't give thanks FOR the circumstances but IN the circumstances. We must remind ourselves of the many times God has gotten us through tough times before and now counting our blessings keeps us focused on what God is able to do.

It's then we are promised that God's peace will keep our spirit, soul and body blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We know the scriptures tell us that Jesus is coming again. We look forward to the promise of this second coming as they looked forward to His first appearance.

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

Mindful of the words of the prophet Isaiah, we gather our thoughts and prayers with hope and humbly call on God to help us in our needs.

Holy God, as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of Christ our Saviour we ask that you will answer our prayers and make us a holy people, fit to greet him with eager hearts. May our Church leaders be blessed with wisdom and holiness to guide us through this season of Advent, to a holy, peaceful and joyful Christmas. We raise before you our Churches here in the East Oldham and ask with eager longing for the return of Christ: may our Advent celebrations help all who join with us to prepare a place in their hearts and homes for you and your son Jesus Christ our Lord

(Short Silence)

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Creator God, help the leaders of nations to seek that justice and peace which come from the Word of God, may there be good news for the poor and the broken hearted; release for those illegally or wrongly imprisoned and an end to the conflicts throughout the world which lead to so much grief and mourning. We pray too for all those who strive to rebuild in places which have been ravaged by war or natural disaster

(Short Silence)

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Father God, your son Jesus you lived an ordinary life in Nazareth, with human parents, brothers and sisters. He understands the difficulties faced in families. We pray for all of those providing support for troubled families and strengthening our community life. We especially pray for our family members who have not yet heard of the coming of Christ and that this Christmas they may hear and believe the Good News and receive the gift of the Christ Child.

(Short Silence)

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Merciful God, may your blessing be upon all those who are in pain or sickness, those who are anxious or troubled. We know that you are always present with us, even when sometimes you seem far away. Help us to feel your presence when we pass through dark places, and sustain us and all who suffer through our pains and sorrows. In particular, we pray for ...

(Short Silence)

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Gracious God, may those who have died may be granted the peace of your heavenly kingdom. Give rest to the souls of those who have gone from our lives to meet with you and may they now, released from pain or sorrow, find life eternal at rest in your presence. In particular, we pray for ...

(Short Silence)

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Faithful God, as we continue this Advent journey, teach us to turn to you in times of joy and pleasure as well as we do when faced with fear and sorrow. Help us to put our differences behind us and to unite behind the great commission of Jesus to make disciples of all nations and all people.

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 Carol of the bells (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.

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 Good Christian men rejoice (please 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 St Barnabas and 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

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts;
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit
that when your Christ comes again
we may shine as lights before his face;
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.

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.