

Sunday 4 December 2022

The Second Sunday of Advent



Sermon © Pete Haslam.

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 Omitted in 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

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious. *Isaiah 11:1-10*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans

Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, 'Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name'; and again he says, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people'; and again, 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him'; and again Isaiah says, 'The

root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.'

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. *Romans 15:4-13*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 All heaven declares [\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All Glory to you O Lord.

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight".' Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

'I baptise you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.' *Matthew 3:1-12*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

They came, streaming down to the Jordan from Judea, Galilee, Perea and Decapolis, Jewish men, women and children, hoping to hear the word of God. And they saw

just what they expected. They saw a wild man, a hairy man, a man straight out of the Old Testament tradition. He was dressed, so Matthew tells us, in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, just as the Scriptures described the prophet Elijah. And what's more, he came out of the wilderness, the barren land between the Dead Sea and the hills of Judea. Prophets always come out of the wilderness. There in the desert, the dryness and the dust, the hunger and the thirst scours the city out of them, the cities and towns choked with commerce and politics, smelling of ambition and compromise, success and failure. Prophets step into our world from outside of time, to remind us of the eternal. And the ones who came to listen were the ones for whom the present wasn't good enough. The ones who came to hear God speak were the ones who wanted something to change.

And they heard what they expected, too. John's message was straight out of the OT tradition, they might have been listening to of Elijah or Amos or Joel calling for the people to prepare for the day of the Lord. And just as Amos had, John wakes them up to the fact that God isn't going to deliver them from Rome the way he did from Egypt, or during the time of the Judges when all they had to do was promise to reform and God would send them a rescuer. He expects them to change first. The way John phrases it is, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' This doesn't just mean being sorry. The word means literally to change one's mind. It also means a change of heart and a change of direction. 'Change, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

John knew that they couldn't change themselves; why if the Jewish people had learned anything at all over the past few centuries it was that no matter what happened, everything stayed the same. There's a French proverb that goes, 'the more things change, the more they stay the same.' No matter who was ruling, whether it was the Persians or the Egyptians or the Greeks or the Romans there was injustice and cruelty and oppression and betrayal. So John offered them a chance to change.

How many of them really repented in those long-ago days by the Jordan?

We have no way of knowing. Just like at the Billy Graham crusades, I'm sure many came forward from the excitement of the moment, caught up in the power of the preaching and the enthusiasm of the crowd. We have no way of knowing how many people understood that neither without repentance, baptism was meaningless, nor without baptism, repentance wasn't completed. We don't even know how many people understood that the true baptism was yet to come.

Many people, later on when the apostles were carrying out the Great Commission, told them that they had only experienced John's baptism, not Jesus'. John's baptism was a human event, an event foreshadowing the true baptism that Jesus would bring. And he understood this. He understood that the only way for this

radical change, this conversion, this true repentance to take place is if God himself were to bring the change about. That's exactly what God does through the powerful tools of Word and Sacrament.

John the Baptist used them to prepare the people to meet with God. They were drawn out into the desert, some from many miles away, to hear the words of the living God. And as they listened to John's message, something marvellous happened; they began confessing their sins! They owned up to their guilt. That's not something that human beings typically do, is it. Except for the fruitcakes that show up at police stations every full moon confessing to all the open cases on file, most of us would rather point the finger at our neighbour than admit what we have been up to. Or would do if we had the nerve.

So what prompted them to do it? They longed for something new, something different, and if God said it had to start with themselves, why, okay, it was worth a shot. And if they were honest with themselves, they knew they had a lot of things to be forgiven for, even if it were something as small as mending a tunic on the Sabbath or as serious as eating oysters. They knew they needed forgiveness.

Yet there were a few who came down from the cities who liked things the way they were. The Sadducees especially were content; they were usually wealthy, and they controlled the religious power of the temple and had the ear of the Roman occupiers. The Pharisees had their own form of power, though, and they were pretty sure that they, with their knowledge of the law, held the keys to heaven and hell themselves. But some of them came down 'to listen to John anyway. You'd expect that John would be thrilled to see the religious leaders show up at the revival meeting. But John's reaction is just the opposite. Why? Because he recognised that the reason the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to be baptised—if indeed they did, many were just observing the phenomenon and wondering what to make of it—those who did mostly wanted to retain their religious power and prestige by going through the motions of repentance in order to bolster their public image.

How could John be so sure? He was certain because these religious leaders held beliefs that made true repentance impossible. The Pharisees considered themselves to be really good people on their own; the Sadducees didn't believe in life after death. Both groups thought that they already had God's seal of approval since their pedigree could be traced back to Abraham. Neither group thought they needed to change, and if they didn't need to be changed, why, they certainly didn't need a saviour!

They didn't think they needed to be forgiven, either ... Who could be better than they already were? They must have been really shocked and offended to hear John's denunciation: 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee the coming

wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.' John denounces their empty actions, their false pretences, and their outright hypocrisy. In a way, though, John's baptism was easy to accept. We can all find something in ourselves that needs fixing. Even a Pharisee might remember a time when he

Accidentally broke a Sabbath rule. They could get behind the notion that all they had to do was try a little harder. But the repentance called for when Jesus would come, why, that was another matter altogether. Jesus would call for far more than an outward change of behaviour, and those who only sought forgiveness and change at that level would balk and turn away.

Jesus comes bearing both water and fire. Only those who are willing to go through the death to self that the waters of baptism represent are safe from the fire that is the presence of the living God. Only those who are changed from the inside out can bear the fruit Jesus is looking for ... the fruit of his love for us, blossoming into love for one another. 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

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.