

Sunday 18 December 2022

The Fourth Sunday of Advent



Sermon © the Revd Robin Wilding.

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 Omitted in 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 Book of the Prophet Isaiah

The Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. *Isaiah 7:10-16*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, to all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. *Romans 1:1-7*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Gaudate

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All Glory to you O Lord.

The birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream

and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel',

which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus. *Matthew 1:18-end*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

I am going through the 'O Antiphons' with you—all 7 of them (yes, a 7-point sermon!). The O antiphons are an ancient Advent prayer in its origins from the AD 400s though developed further later. Paul has sent around electronically a fuller meditation on them I did some years ago if you'd like to use the prayer this coming week – the recommendation is to do a section a day running up to Christmas. We know this prayer also from the words of O come O come Emmanuel.

O Wisdom, who came from the mouth of the Most High, and reaches from one end to another, mightily and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of love.

God who is most high and majestic beyond our imaginings is also active in the world. He sees all things from one end to another, and more than that he orders all things—he is in charge and working his purposes and plans out in this world of ours.

O Adonai and leader of the house of Israel, who did appear in the bush to Moses in a flame of fire, and gave him the law on Sinai: Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

God chooses to reveal himself to Moses and through him call the enslaved people of Israel to follow him. In Exodus that first revelation is in fire—God is glorious and majestic and scary and awesome but out of love reveals that majestic power to Moses in the bush that is not consumed by his presence. This high mighty God can be known without it destroying us. And he rescues the Israelites, makes them a nation, and gives them the Law on Mount Sinai through Moses. The high God is still

scary because the Law reveals how much we fall short of his purity and so how much in danger we are.

O Root of Jesse, who stands as a sign to all people, at whom kings shut their mouths, and whom the Gentiles seek: Come and deliver us and tarry not.

God continues his revelation and work by choosing the line of the true King of Israel. Jesse's family is chosen, and the youngest and least impressive son is anointed King. And the promise is that through this line, from these roots will come the King of God's choosing, the one who brings in God's complete rule and plan. A sign for all people, a king above all earthly majesty and rule, and the one who will draw even the Gentiles under his banner. Yet he is still of the Root of Jesse, still seemingly weak and insignificant but in him is the majesty not of this world but of God Himself.

O Key of David, and sceptre of the house of Israel, who opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens: Come and bring the prisoners out of gaol, those that sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

What this key opens remains open and vice versa. The way to God's presence is nailed open at the cross, and the way to condemnation and hell is nailed shut for us. Those imprisoned by circumstances, by harm done to them, by wounded bodies and wounded lives find in him a freedom that transcends their circumstances—that leaves them dancing not mourning. For those who live in the darkness of shame and loss, enslaved by their pasts, by their actions, or kept limited by others actions he offers Light that lifts them out of enslavement into new beginnings, that lifts them from shame. For those who live with the reality of death and loss and who know the fear and uncertainty of life, the dread of what is to come, and maybe the fear of physical death find the shadow lifts, hope has come, we are not defined by what has happened, has been done, to us but by the love and light and power of God's answer.

O Dayspring, brightness of the light everlasting, and sun of righteousness: Come and enlighten those that sit in darkness and the shadow of death

Dayspring describes the dawn—there's a moment when the hold of the dark is finally broken—the twilight may have held on to gloom but suddenly light banishes the darkness. Day dawns. The shadows of night are defeated. This coming Jesus is the Dayspring—shining God's light into the darkness of the world.

O King of nations, and their desire; the cornerstone who makes both one: Come and save mankind, whom you have formed of clay.

This Messiah is not just for the individual but for the world. The Cornerstone on which all is built. We are formed from clay, from humble beginnings, from the earth and tend to earthly answers without hope beyond. All nations look for answers and struggle to find the right way to be, the right way to plan, the right future to aim for. We so need to know this in these present hard times—and live lives of trust and hope in the middle of them.

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Saviour: Come and save us, O Lord our God.

We come to the heart and the centre of it all—the shocking news that this coming King we long for is also ‘God with us’. God himself acts, speaks himself into the humanity he has made. And turns the world upside down.

Grace that reaches our littleness. Love that gives without measure, counting the cost but reckoning that we are worth the effort and the literal blood sweat and tears. Mercy for our littleness and our frailty and our failures and our rebellion and our fallenness.

Hope of the nations but my hope too, their Saviour but O I am in need too. Come this Christmas to my life, my need, and be my Saviour.

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.