

Sunday 5 November 2023

The Fourth Sunday before Advent



Sermon © the Revd Robin Wilding.

Prayers of intercession © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

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.

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 [I lift my eyes to the quiet hills](#) (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.

Jesus says, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand’.

So let us turn away from sin and turn to Christ,
confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

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

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for the Fourth Sunday before Advent

Almighty and eternal God,
you have kindled the flame of love
in the hearts of the saints:
grant to us the same faith and power of love,
that, as we rejoice in their triumphs,
we may be sustained by their example and fellowship;
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.

Psalm

1 Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause
against an ungodly people;
from those who are deceitful and unjust
deliver me!

2 For you are the God in whom I take refuge;
why have you cast me off?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because of the oppression of the enemy?

3 O send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy hill
and to your dwelling.

4 Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy;
and I will praise you with the harp,
O God, my God.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

Psalm 43

First reading

A reading from the book of the Prophet Micah

Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets
who lead my people astray,
who cry 'Peace'
when they have something to eat,
but declare war against those
who put nothing into their mouths.
Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision,
and darkness to you, without revelation.
The sun shall go down upon the prophets,
and the day shall be black over them;
the seers shall be disgraced,
and the diviners put to shame;
they shall all cover their lips,
for there is no answer from God.
But as for me, I am filled with power,
with the spirit of the Lord,
and with justice and might,
to declare to Jacob his transgression
and to Israel his sin.
Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob
and chiefs of the house of Israel,
who abhor justice
and pervert all equity,

who build Zion with blood
and Jerusalem with wrong!
Its rulers give judgement for a bribe,
its priests teach for a price,
its prophets give oracles for money;
yet they lean upon the Lord and say,
'Surely the Lord is with us!
No harm shall come upon us.'
Therefore because of you
Zion shall be ploughed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
and the mountain of the house a wooded height.

Micah 3:5-end

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

You remember our labour and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was towards you believers. As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, urging and encouraging you and pleading that you should lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers. *1 Thessalonians 2:9-13*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 As the deer pants for the waters

[\(please click here\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. Then he asked them, 'You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' Jesus answered them, 'Beware that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah!' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

'Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But anyone who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come. *Matthew 24:1-14*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

Our gospel reading is an uncomfortable look at the near and distant futures of Jesus' time—a prophecy of disaster fulfilled in 70 AD but also beyond to the full freedom of Kingdom Come. Jesus doesn't hide from those who will follow him that life as his follower will often be really difficult. That remains true to this day—we don't hear about them in the media but there is a significant Palestinian Christian community and our brother and sisters in Christ in Gaza need our prayers particularly at this time.

The Psalm we read this morning speaks very much to this struggle. I get the feeling of life being a struggle, situations and people being horrible, and spiritual experience being squashed by it all. So:

‘Why are you downcast O my soul?’ Feelings are powerful drivers of our attitudes and responses. Antagonism from people leads to defensiveness and perhaps hiding ourselves away. What was promised seems not to have come to pass so we feel cheated and lied to and perhaps angry and resentful. And to make it worst some of those promises seem to have been made by God—he’s let us down and that just seems confusing. How are we supposed to react when God is involved? Can we be angry with him? Not a good place to be living in.

Before we move on a thought: We can have a problem with expectations, a fear of being disappointed but it is better to have high expectations and risk being let down than to expect nothing and so receive it.

‘For I will yet praise him’ Perhaps we can truly connect with our poet. He has lost that sense of God’s presence, of the awe of his love and hold on our lives. But here we have the first glimmer of light in his darkness. He may be down but he’s not out! He has started to lift his eyes beyond his circumstances.

For him the key is to get back to a place—the Temple in Jerusalem. A place infused with presence, redolent in worship, resounding in praise. And places can be precious and necessary to us: places where we know God will be present for us. May be church, may be a wild spot, may be a special group of people who help. The reconnection point where we can touch again the love and wonder of God.

The danger can come when we leave him there, when we only expect to know him in ‘special places’. We are supposed to know him and make him known so experiencing him and finding him in the ordinary and mundane of our lives.

‘My Saviour and my God’ We have no sense that the pressures of our Psalmists life have somehow miraculously eased, that he finds himself on the proverbial Cloud 9, but something significant has happened. His eyes have lifted above the circumstances he’s in, his awareness now is of a God who holds him in the midst of it all and helps him to overcome.

New focus. New perspective. Hope that life is not defined by our confusion, or our depression, or our illness, or our pain, or the actions of other people but instead is defines by the love and compassion of the God who has save us, who is saving us, and who will save us to the uttermost.

Let’s love him, and follow him, and know him, and trust him in every time and circumstance of life.

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

These prayers are inspired by Psalm 43

Loving Father in Heaven, we hope in your help and will praise you continually.
My help and my God.

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Father in Heaven, inspire joy in our hearts as we go to your altar.
My help and my God.

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Father in Heaven, exchange the disquiet of our souls with praise.
My help and my God.

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Father in Heaven, send your light and truth to lead our souls toward you.
My help and my God.

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Father in Heaven, help us take refuge in you whenever we feel cast off or alone.
My help and my God.

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Father in Heaven, defend our cause when anyone acts against us.
My help and my God.

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Father in Heaven, deliver us when we are victims of deceit and injustice.
My help and my God.

All Hear our prayer.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

To crown all things there must be love,
to bind all together and complete the whole.
Let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.
And the peace of the Lord be always with you.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 There is a hope

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

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below.

The Dismissal

God the Father,
who has given to his Son the name above every name,
strengthen you to proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord.

All Amen.

God the Son,
who is our great high priest passed into the heavens,
plead for you at the right hand of the Father.

All Amen.

God the Holy Spirit,
who pours out his abundant gifts upon the Church,
make you faithful servants of Christ our King.

All Amen.

And the blessing of God the Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 [My hope is built on nothing less](#) (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 the Holy Innocents 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

Lord of heaven,
in this eucharist you have brought us near
to an innumerable company of angels
and to the spirits of the saints made perfect:
as in this food of our earthly pilgrimage
we have shared their fellowship,
so may we come to share their joy in 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.