

Sunday 28 January 2024

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany



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 All creation worships you

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

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.

By the mercies of God,

let us confess our sins and present our bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and acceptable to him,
which is our spiritual worship:

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

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

God our creator,
who in the beginning
commanded the light to shine out of darkness:
we pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
may dispel the darkness of ignorance and unbelief,
shine into the hearts of all your people,
and reveal the knowledge of your glory
in the face of 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.

First reading

A reading from the Fifth Book of Moses called Deuteronomy

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: 'If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.' Then the Lord replied to me: 'They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die.'

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Revelation of St John the Divine

A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born.

And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.

Revelation 12:1-5a

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [Revelation song](#)
[Revelation song](#)

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

All Glory to you O Lord.

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, 'What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.'

At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Mark 1:21-28

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

This morning I want to look at our Old Testament reading from Deuteronomy.

So I am going to give you 5 true statements about a Bible character, and then I'll ask you *who* I'm referring to. When he was born—the people of Israel were under the control of a foreign nation. When he was a new-born, his life was in danger from a powerful King. He came to save his people. He went down to Egypt. And at one point in his life he fasted for forty days and nights. Who was I talking about? That's right Jesus and Moses. All five of those statements applied to both Jesus and Moses! And that makes sense ... because God had promised Moses: that he would raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. Jesus was the prophet that God had promised. A prophet like Moses. But there was a significant difference between the two men. While Jesus was like Moses, He was also *greater* than Moses.

That's what our passage today is saying: 'Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses And all through the book of Hebrews we are repeatedly told that Jesus is better than anything else. Jesus offered a better hope, covenant, resurrection, sacrifice. And He Himself was better than any angel; Better than any Old Testament Priest; and of course ... He was better than Moses. Now that last is quite a statement. To say Jesus was better than Moses would be hard for some Jewish believers to swallow, because Moses was a pillar in Jewish society. One man noted that 'The Jews thought Moses was a far prophet and leader than anyone else And Moses had been protected by God from his birth through his death. And between those two dates Moses life, was filled with miracle upon miracle upon miracle. And while God spoke to the prophets in visions ... God spoke to Moses face to face.

The Jews had great confidence in the Law of Moses. The Old Testament commandments and the rituals were their highest priorities. And for the Jews Moses and the Law were one. Even In the New Testament the commands of God were often referred to as the 'Law of Moses.' Moses not only brought the Ten Commandments down from the Mountain, he also wrote the first 5 five books of the Bible—which laid out all the laws that governed everything in Jewish life. Because of all this ... some Jews believed Moses was even greater than the angels. However, in Hebrews 3, the writer called the people to look to Jesus ... not Moses because, while Moses was great, Jesus was far greater.' Think about it this way: Back in 1972, NASA launched a space probe called Pioneer 10. The satellite's primary mission was to reach Jupiter, photograph the planet and its moons, and then beam all that data

back to earth. But Pioneer 10 not only reached Jupiter ... it did a lot more than that! By 1997, twenty-five years after it was launched, Pioneer 10 had travelled more than six billion miles from the sun and it continued to beam back radio signals to scientists on Earth. And Pioneer's computing power? Well our mobile phones have one million times more power than Pioneer 10 did back when it was launched. But as much as that 'little Satellite that could'—did, today's spacecraft are built far better and far more powerful. In the same way, Moses was good and he did mighty things for God. But Moses couldn't even compare to the power and might of Jesus.

As Christians this idea that Jesus was a prophet—and a better prophet than Moses—I don't believe we think about that very much. I mean, Jesus being a priest and king we all accept. But Jesus being a prophet? Should we care whether Jesus was a prophet or not? Well ... God cared! God told Moses He'd raise up a prophet like Moses; and since that prophet was Jesus—there's got to be something to it. But what? Why is that important?

Well first, by definition: A prophet was someone who declared God's will to His people. In Deuteronomy 18:15 Moses said that 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen.' He *will* be a Prophet ... so listen to Him. And that's what God said when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.' When Jesus spoke, He declared the will of God to us, because that's what a prophet does. But Jesus was different than all other prophets. Throughout the Old Testament, prophets would say 'Thus Says The Lord' - this is what God says! But when Jesus spoke, He declared 'I say unto you.' And that's one of the things that amazed Jesus' audiences.

But prophets had a message. But what message (as a Prophet) did Jesus come to give us?

Well, there was the standard stuff that most prophets preached. Jesus preached repentance. Matthew 4:17 tells us that 'Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Every prophet preached that people needed to repent/turn away from their sins because people often thought they were ok the way they were. And God had to repeatedly remind people ... No you're not! You're not OK. You've all sinned and fall short of glory. No one stands before God based on their own righteousness. You need to repent; you need to change your life. And Jesus preached judgment. 'The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from

the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace There is going to come a day of judgment, and you're going to want to be ready for that day. Those were the types of things every prophet said.

But what prophet ever said 'Come unto *me*, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Did you catch that? 'Come unto Me!' 'I will give you rest No prophet could ever have said anything like that. No wise man; No philosopher; No person of wealth and power... and definitely not Moses.

But Jesus could, because there was something about Jesus that changed people. Jesus hung out with drunkards, prostitutes and outcasts. And by the time Jesus was finished with them, they weren't drunkards, prostitutes or outcasts anymore. The very presence of Jesus changed people. Jesus had promised: 'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.' The very presence of Jesus changed people. Do you remember the time when Jesus had been invited to Simon the Pharisees house? Simon invited Jesus, but deliberately snubbed him—he didn't give Jesus a kiss of greeting, or washed His feet, or anoint His head with oil. These were common courtesies that Simon chose to ignore, perhaps with the intention of creating a scene if Jesus had shown anger in this. But then ... a woman comes into the room. She's not been invited. She's not even the kind of person you'd invite to this kind of gathering. She's a prostitute, a lady of the evening, a pavement princess. I doubt she wanted to do anything more than simply be in the presence of this prominent Rabbi. Jesus would have been the rock star of the age - an important person who everyone wanted to meet. But I doubt she came to be changed by Him... but she was. She was changed. She's standing near Jesus, and do you what she did first? She cried! She wept tears of shame and guilt, and her tears wet Jesus feet, and she began to wipe his feet dry with her hair. There was something about just being near Jesus that changed her.

Even just the story about Jesus has been known to change people's lives. Back in 1979 there was a film called *The Jesus Movie*. It was translated into numerous languages and used an evangelistic tool. Missionaries would set up a bed sheet for a screen and show the film It was a film about Jesus. It wasn't the real Jesus. And yet, even that film touched lives.

You see, Jesus *was* a prophet... and His message was *himself*! Jesus said 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in *me*, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die' And then He asked: 'Do you believe this?' So friends do we believe this?

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

Jesus calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light.
Washed clean by the waters of baptism,
let us pray that we may live the life to which he has called us.
Lord Jesus, eternal Word,
proclaimed as the Christ by John the forerunner,
hear us as we pray for all who proclaim your word ...
Lord of truth,

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, baptising with the Spirit and with fire,
strengthen us to withstand all the trials of our faith ...
Lord of truth,

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, bringing forgiveness to all who repent,
teach your Church dependence on your grace ...

Lord of truth,

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, fulfilment of the promises of old,
give hope to all who suffer or are ignored ...

Lord of truth,

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, beloved Son of the Father,
anoint us with the gifts of your Holy Spirit ...

Lord of truth,

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, bringer of hope,
share with all the faithful the riches of eternal life ...

Lord of truth,

All hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ,
in you the Father makes us and all things new.

Transform the poverty of our nature

by the riches of your grace,

and in the renewal of our lives

make known your heavenly glory.

All Amen.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

Christ is our peace.

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.

The old has passed away: behold, everything has become new.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 I heard the voice of Jesus say [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below:

The Dismissal

Christ our Lord,
to whom kings bowed down in worship and offered gifts,
reveal to you his glory
and pour upon you the riches of his grace;
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 Holy, Holy, Holy [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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

Generous Lord,
in word and Eucharist we have proclaimed the mystery of your love:
help us so to live out our days
that we may be signs of your wonders in the world;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

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.