

A Service of Morning Worship for the Second Sunday before Advent, 15th November 2020

Welcome *all are welcomed by the officiant.*

Opening Greeting and Gathering

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, Sovereign God, to you be glory and praise for ever! In your tender compassion, the dawn from on high has broken upon us and dispelled the lingering shadows of the night. As we look for your coming among us this day, open our eyes to behold your presence and strengthen our hands to do your will. **Amen.**

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in us the fire of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In today's readings the prophet Zephaniah gives a vivid picture of the breath-taking future God has in store for a rebellious world. Paul is convinced that God's intervention is near – fearful for the world at large but joyful for God's faithful ones. The parable of the talents may leave us feeling insecure. It is not a story to encourage the least complacency. Give thanks for God's prodding and pray to be stirred into vigilance before God.

Sentence: I am the vine, you are the branches, says the Lord. Those who abide in me, and I in them, bear much fruit.
John 15.5

Call to Worship and Opening Prayers

Come! Share the joy of the Lord!

Delight in God's goodness!

Praise God who gives each person a special gift to be nurtured and shared.

Lord, we thank you for these gifts!

Come, let us worship God who entrusts us with so much.

Lord, make us worthy of your love and trust in us. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

Lord, be with us this day as we gather to celebrate your love for us. Challenge and prepare us to be your disciples in this aching and hurting world, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

God of majesty and power, how great is your presence to us! The mountains tremble, the seas roar at the sound of your name! Yet you have chosen to come to us in love and tenderness. You have called us to be people who will act in ways of peace and justice in your world. Open our hearts and our spirits, O Lord, to hear your word, and having heard, to act in ministries of hope and peace for all your earth. These things we pray in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Now we gather in your royal presence with gratitude and praise for all that you have done for us.

May your Holy Spirit inspire our worship. May our words and music, our thoughts and prayers, our individual lives, bring honour and glory to you. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection have brought us everlasting life. Amen.

To you alone, Faithful Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, be all glory and honour, now and forever. Amen.

Prayers of Penitence and Absolution

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.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

A moment of silence is kept.

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 people.

Prayer of Confession *(based on our Gospel reading)*

Lord God, we confess to you our sin: those things which have hurt others and which have offended you.

Forgive us for not investing your gifts wisely. We have been negligent with the time and energy you give us – often spending it all on ourselves while others have had to do more than their share of helping and caring.

A moment of silence is kept

We confess, O Lord, that through fear, greed, or ignorance, we have not always used in a faithful and responsible manner the wealth you give us.

Forgive us for being satisfied with sharing so little with those who are in need, while spending so much, not only on our needs, but also on our desires.

A moment of silence is kept

We confess, O Lord, that we are prone to forget the purpose behind what you do for us. We forget that you measure us by what we do with your gifts.

Forgive us for when we have buried the talents and failed to work with all the things you give us.

A moment of silence is kept

Gracious God - forgive us.

Touch us and make us whole. Amen

The Absolution.

May the Father of all mercies cleanse you from your sins, pardon you and restore you in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Hear the Good News: although we have not always been completely faithful, God still welcomes us with patience and kindness. Therefore, as people of God's promise, let us receive forgiveness, embrace hope, and faithfully respond, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Glory to God! We are forgiven. We have hope. We will respond. Amen.

The Canticle: Psalm 66

Refrain: All the earth shall worship you, O Lord.

O be joyful in God, all you lands; sing the glory of his name; sing the glory of his praise.

Say to God, 'How awesome are your deeds! because of your great strength your enemies shall bow before you.

'All the earth bows down before you, sings to you, sings out your name.'

Come now and see the works of God, how wonderful he is in his dealings with all people.

He turned the sea into dry land, so that they went through the water on foot, and there we rejoiced in him.
In his might he rules for ever; his eyes keep watch over the nations; let no rebel rise up against him.

Bless our God, you peoples; make the voice of his praise to be heard;
Who holds our souls in life and will not allow our feet to slip.

For you, O God, have proved us; you have tried us just as silver is tried.
You brought us into the snare; you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.

You let enemies ride over our heads; we went through fire and water; but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.
I will enter your house with burnt-offerings and will pay you my vows, which I promised with my lips and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.

I will offer you sacrifices of fat beasts with the smoke of rams; I will give you oxen and goats.
Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for me.

I called out to him with my mouth, and his praise was on my tongue.
If I had found evil in my heart, the Lord would not have heard me;

But in truth God has heard me; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.
Blessèd be God, who has not rejected my prayer, nor withheld his love from me.

Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.
All the earth shall worship you, O Lord. Amen.

The Collect for the Second Sunday before Advent.

Let us pray:

Gracious God, showering us with gifts and challenging us to use them to serve that which is greater than ourselves, may we be humble enough to receive what you give for our delight, and selfless enough to give of ourselves for others, so that we and all whom we meet may flourish and grow to maturity in you. We ask this in the name of Jesus, in the power of the Spirit and in the promise of glory. **Amen.**

Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18 *(The Day of the Lord is near: a day of wrath and punishment)*

A Reading from the Book of Zephaniah:

Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is at hand; the Lord has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests. At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs, those who say in their hearts, "The Lord will not do good, nor will he do harm." Their wealth shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.

The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.

I will bring such distress upon people that they shall walk like the blind; because they have sinned against the Lord, their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath; in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed; for a full, a terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

For the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm: 90: 1-8 & 12 (*God's eternity and human frailty*)

Refrain: Satisfy us by your loving kindness; so shall we rejoice and be glad.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

You turn us back to dust, and say, "Turn back, you mortals."

For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.

You sweep us away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning;

in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

For we are consumed by your anger; by your wrath we are overwhelmed.

You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.

Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Refrain: Satisfy us by your loving kindness; so shall we rejoice and be glad.

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11 23 (*The Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night*)

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Thessalonians.

Concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters,* you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

For the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gradual Hymn (David Cottrell)

1 Be thou my guardian and my guide,
and hear me when I call;
let not my slippery footsteps slide,
and hold me lest I fall.

2 The world, the flesh, and Satan dwell
around the path I tread;
O save me from the snares of hell,
thou quick'ner of the dead.

3 And if I tempted am to sin,
and outward things are strong,
do thou, O Lord, keep watch within,
and save my soul from wrong.

4 Still let me ever watch and pray,
and feel that I am frail;
that if the tempter cross my way,
yet he may not prevail.

Matthew 25: 14-30 (*The Parable of the talents.*)

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia. You have been faithful in small things; come and join in your master's happiness. **Alleluia.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew. **Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus said to his disciples, ‘the kingdom of heaven is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, “Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.”

And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, “Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.”

Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, “Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.”

But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return, I would have received what was my own with interest.

So take the talent from him and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you O Christ.**

A sermon is attached.

The Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father.
God from God,
Light from light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Intercessions and Lord's Prayer

Officiant: In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us bring our prayers and intercessions to the Father.

Generous God, you share from your abundance diverse gifts. Help us to use what we are given to grow your kingdom. We pray for Archbishop Michael and Archdeacon Christopher and all who minister in this Diocese during troubled times: may they lead with insight, wisdom, and compassion, bringing hope to those who feel vulnerable and afraid for the future. We pray for our parish that all may use their talents to serve the lonely, the fearful and those in fragile health. Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Generous God, your bountiful love blesses the earth. Inspire wise and fair stewardship of these riches. Encourage and uphold those who are involved in the fight against Covid-19. Inspire all so that scientific discoveries and resources can be shared, generously, with all peoples, especially with those who are poor, disadvantaged and struggling to provide food, education and security for themselves and their families. Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Generous God, you set us as a body with many parts both limbs and organs. Combine these different callings and abilities into a wonderful symphony of your transforming love. Encourage new talents and skills to grow and emerge in this parish so that new ideas and visions may be considered and taken forward. Encourage us to share our love in imaginative ways as we meet those facing unemployment and insecurity in these times of uncertainty. May your Holy Spirit allow all to find the support and encouragement they need in order to face the future with hope. Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Generous God, we give you thanks for the skill and talent of doctors and nurses as they care for the sick and dying. Uphold them in their battle with COVID 19 and keep them free from infection. Hear us as we pray for those known to us who are in need at this time. We remember, particularly, Colin Looker and John Tyler. Surround them with your love and bring your comfort and a sense of your presence to their loved ones and families. Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Generous God, you give life and give it abundantly. Be close to our dearly departed brothers and sisters and to all those known to you, alone, in the glory of your heavenly kingdom. We especially pray for those whose anniversary falls at this time. Comfort all who suffer the pain of bereavement: may they be comforted and know your presence with them.

Generous God, visit us, your people, and pour out your strength and courage upon us, that we may hurry to make you welcome not only in our concern for others, but by serving them generously and faithfully in your name.

Lord of the Church, **hear our prayer, and make us one in heart and mind to serve you with joy for ever. Amen.**

Introduction to the Lord's prayer

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray as our Saviour taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Introduction to the Peace

Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be called children of God. We meet in the name of Christ and share his peace. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

We offer one another a sign of peace.

Canticle: A song of god's grace: *Benedictus Deus* (Ephesians 1. 3-10)

Refrain: The glorious grace of God is freely bestowed on us in the Belovèd.

Blessèd are you, the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for you have blest us in Christ Jesus with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

You chose us to be yours in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before you.

In love you destined us to be your children, through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of your will,
To the praise of your glorious grace, which you freely bestowed on us in the Belovèd.

In you, we have redemption through the sacrifice of Christ, the forgiveness of our sins,
According to the riches of your grace, which you have lavished upon us.

You have made known to us, in all wisdom and insight, the mystery of your will,
According to your purpose which you set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time,

To unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.

Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

The glorious grace of God is freely bestowed on us in the Belovèd.

Final Prayers

A Prayer of Thanksgiving, based around our readings

Let us pray:

We give you all thanks and praise, O God, for you have destined us for salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You created the earth and entrusted it into our hands. You raised up prophets to warn of your great coming and spoke through them of the day of conviction and the day of liberation.

You have spoken to us through your son, Jesus, teaching us to look to you and trust in your kindness, and to be faithful stewards of your gifts. He was scorned and mocked and died for us but was raised by you. You have promised a time of judgment and deliverance, when Christ will come as unexpectedly as a thief in the night, to reveal the children of light and gather all who have been trustworthy with what you have given into his kingdom of joy.

Therefore, with our hearts lifted high, we offer you thanks and praise at all times through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

