

Our Sunday Service Together

30th October 2022

4th Sunday before Advent



An Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
one God, who was, and who is, and who is to come, the Almighty.

Alleluia

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's
holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to
you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us
our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his
kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. Amen.

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 32.1-7

Happy the one whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.

Happy the one to whom the Lord imputes no guilt, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

For I held my tongue; my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long.

Your hand was heavy upon me day and night; my moisture was dried up like the drought in summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and my iniquity I did not hide.

I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Therefore let all the faithful make their prayers to you in time of trouble; in the great water flood, it shall not reach them.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading 2 Thessalonians 1.1-4 and 11-12

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. ⁴ Therefore we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring.

¹¹ To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfil by his power every good resolve and work of faith, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

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 Gospel Luke 19.1-10

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ² A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' ⁶ So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷ All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' ⁸ Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' ⁹ Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

at the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day *Revd John Webb writes*

For some time, it has seemed impossible to get into the supermarkets without tripping over pumpkins or being faced by scary masks, grotesque costumes, skeletons and skulls. This has been to encourage people to celebrate Hallowe'en with trick or treat and pumpkin lanterns. It seems strange that all this stress is put on Hallowe'en when its significance is only that it is the day before the great celebration of All Saints when we are invited to remember and give thanks for all those known and unknown who have witnessed to Christ and served the church. The following day, All Souls is almost as significant when we think about and give thanks for all those who have helped us on our journey of faith and are now in the closer presence of God. Two very significant days and yet it is the day before, referred to as the 'eve' is the one which has caught the popular imagination and the ever-responsive supermarkets. I feel very sad about that and am not convinced that it is only 'a harmless bit of fun' and that I am 'a grumpy old man'. Life is frightening enough without scaring young people and filling their minds with distorted ideas. At a time when we are told there is a mental health crisis among young people it would seem to be irresponsible to stress a distorted supernatural.

I suspect that the reason for the interest in Hallowe'en and ghosts is a natural curiosity about the supernatural. We must all consider the deeper questions about the meaning of life and what happens when we die. This concern is particularly evident when death is sudden or violent particularly as in war or an accident. After WWI when so many young men had died and there was no opportunity for proper funerals and mourning rituals all sorts of ways of contacting the dead were tried but none produced any convincing solutions although they did provide some comfort for distressed widows and parents.

The reality we need to face is that we can have no real understanding of 'the spirit world' or what will happen when we die. It is a mystery we can't begin to understand. We can't imagine existing when everything familiar is stripped away – when we are no longer in a physical world and time, space and the material world which we take for granted are no more. Even Jesus wasn't able to say anything except that rather enigmatic phrase 'in my Father's house are many mansions'. At Easter He was resurrected and came back to reassure the disciples, but that was unique to Him and can't be taken as a universal model.

But all is not lost. We may not have the specific details but we do have the witness of Jesus that God loves and cares for us in all sorts of ways. This is well illustrated by in the lovely story of little Zacchaeus who was despised and rejected by the people of Jericho but accepted by Jesus. So as we go into these three interesting days let's forget the spooky bits and rest secure that we are safely in the care of a loving God and, whatever is in store for us, it will be a blessing.

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; help us, as we come into your presence, to be still and know that you are God.

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ let us pray to the Father.

We pray for Michael our bishop and all the clergy in this diocese. May they be filled with the Spirit and serve you as the first disciples. We give thanks for all those who have spread the good news throughout the ages. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

As we look forward to the celebration of All Saints and All Souls we give thanks for all those who have witnessed faithfully to the love of God and pray that we may learn from their example. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

We pray for our new Prime Minister and all those who exercise authority and power, that they may have the wisdom and courage necessary to guide the nations of the world through these difficult times. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

We pray for our young people that they may be protected from harmful influences and exploitation. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

We give thanks for our families, friends and neighbours that we may serve Christ in one another and seek the common good. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

We pray for the sick, suffering and dying and we give thanks and pray for those who use their skill to care for them. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer*

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unflinching love.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and for evermore. Amen.

The Collect

All: Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of
the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen