

Our Sunday Service Together

Advent Sunday, December 3rd 2023



An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia, 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

God the Father forgives us in Christ and heals us by the Holy Spirit. Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness, all slander and malice, and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

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 80.1-7, 17-19 *We say the psalm aloud*

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, you that led Joseph like a flock;

Shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim, before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.

Stir up your mighty strength and come to our salvation.

Turn us again, O God; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry at your people's prayer?

You feed them with the bread of tears; you give them abundance of tears to drink.

You have made us the derision of our neighbours, and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

Let those who burnt it with fire, who cut it down, perish at the rebuke of your countenance.

Let your hand be upon the man at your right hand, the son of man you made so strong for yourself.

And so will we not go back from you; give us life, and we shall call upon your name.

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 1 Corinthians 1.3-9

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

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— ⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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 Mark 13.24-37

²⁴'But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶ Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. ²⁷ Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸ ‘From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³² ‘But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵ Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶ or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.’

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

Multi-tasking is very difficult and I greatly admire mothers who can look after several children and do other essential domestic tasks all at the same time. If I try to do more than one thing, I get so distracted by one that the others get forgotten which can be a disaster particularly if cookers or water are involved! I find this is a problem with my faith because I am expected to be concerned about so many things. In most worship we are asked to think about what we believe, our relationship with God, the sick, the homeless, war in Ukraine and Gaza etc etc. We seem to flit from one thing to another without resolving any of them.

That is why I really like this season of Advent, because it has one specific purpose which is the message in both of our readings. Both Mark and Paul speak of ‘the Day of the Lord’ and ‘the Son of Man coming in Clouds’ which I find rather strange language but seems to be the same message which John the Baptist was giving when he said ‘prepare ye the way of the Lord’. I take that to mean that I should take an in-depth look at my faith – where I am and where I am going – a sort of spiritual MOT.

Most jobs to-day have some sort of Annual Review and I certainly had one for many years. Somebody would prepare a ‘no holds barred’ written review of my work which he would talk through with me and suggest possible ways I might improve. It was not a pleasant experience but if it was done sympathetically, it could be most valuable. I suggest we might use Advent as a time of self-examination a sort of DIY annual review, accepting that it won’t be easy but it can be very rewarding. Perhaps it would be a good start to look back to your baptism and confirmation and the aspirations and good resolutions made then. How has your faith grown and blossomed over the years or does it need refreshing?

Our education system doesn’t seem to help. Primary Schools tend to do very well and always put great effort into Nativity Plays. Many of us have happy memories of our fresh-faced children or grandchildren dressed in an odd assortment of ill-fitting garments nervously acting out the Christmas story or something a bit like it! But after that for many children there is no meaningful faith development so many adults find themselves totally unprepared for the challenges of life – you wouldn’t expect to go through life with only the primary level of understanding of numeracy, literacy or science, so why is it thought adequate for our faith. It’s not surprising that so many feel disillusioned and turn away from religion.

I’m sorry if all that sounds rather negative, but I fear that it is very often the case. However, all is not lost. There is a lot of help available. I’m sure the Rector would be delighted to help, there are a lots of good books, or you could go online or perhaps you could join a study or prayer group. John the Baptist

called people to prepare the way of the lord and then to follow Jesus – that message is still as true today as it was then. Advent is an invitation to ask ourselves how we are doing and ask for help to do better.

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.

On this Advent Sunday let us open our hearts and minds to receive anew the gift of Jesus into our lives. Let us give thanks that in baptism we started our journey of faith and ask that it may be refreshed and renewed as we prepare for Christmas. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Strengthen Bishop Michael and those who seek to serve you in this diocese May they be filled with the Spirit and serve you as the first disciples. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We Pray for the King, Prime Minister, and all World leaders, that they may have the Spirit of wisdom to lead us through this difficult time. May they always use their power for the good of the people and avoid the temptation to personal gain. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the peoples of Israel, Palestine, Ukraine and Russia suffering as the result of war, that solutions may be found for their historic differences and they may live at peace. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the hungry and starving, that the available food may be used for the benefit of all. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray 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.*

Hear us as we remember those who have died..... According to your promises grant them a share in your eternal kingdom. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

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

The Collect

All: Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: 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.

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.