

Sunday 27 December 2020



St John, Apostle and evangelist

Whether or not John the Apostle and John the Evangelist are one and the same, the Church honours on this day the one who proclaims Jesus as the Word made flesh and who is 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. John was one of the sons of Zebedee, along with James and Peter, who followed Jesus. John was there at the Transfiguration of Jesus on the holy mountain; he was there with Jesus at the last supper; he was there with Jesus in his agony in the garden; he was there with Jesus and his mother, standing at the foot of the cross; he was there with Jesus as a witness of his resurrection and 'he saw and believed'.

In fact, John was a witness to the Word, he proclaimed the Word and he lived and died witnessing to the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, who loved him and whom he loved.

- All the Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration have been included at the end rather than

in situ because many following the service will be in isolation and unable to celebrate the sacrament.

- The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.
- To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 [Infant holy, infant lowly](#) (please 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.

Hear what Saint John says: ‘If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’

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 St John

Merciful Lord,
cast your bright beams of light upon the Church:
that, being enlightened by the teaching of your blessed apostle
and evangelist Saint John,
we may so walk in the light of your truth
that we may at last attain to the light of everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ
your incarnate 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 Second Book of Moses called Exodus

Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise and stand, each of them at the entrance of their tents, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent.

When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would

rise and bow down, all of them, at the entrance of their tent. Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. *Exodus 33:7-11a*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the First Letter of St John

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us – we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 John 1

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Away in a manger

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

Peter saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?' When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about him?' Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow

me!' So the rumour spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?' This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

John 21:20-25

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

I love Christmas. I love the way it satisfies all my human senses. It's usually the sounds of Christmas I notice first: the haunting music of carols sung to a bouncing tune. Next are the mouth-watering smells of Christmas: the scent of a freshly erected pine tree and mince pies fresh from the oven. Did I say 'mince pies'? I did because I also love the tastes of Christmas, from mince pies to mulled wine. But for me, the one thing I simply could not do without are the sights of Christmas: the tinsel and the baubles as they sparkle; the twinkling Christmas lights on a tree. Maybe it's the rich primary colours but I suspect it's the reflections that make it for me.

This is how a bauble works: take a layer of something transparent such as glass or plastic and put a very thin layer of something reflective on one side, so it can act like a mirror. We see a glittery effect when we look at tinsel because light bounces off the vast number of tiny, tiny mirrors. And the glitter looks *coloured* because the plastic is coloured, so we see red light if the plastic of the tinsel is red; a bauble made with green glass looks green because the light takes its colour from the green glass. And we see it because of the reflecting light. Think of a tree in candle-light. We don't just see the tinsel; we see a trillion spangles of light shining toward us. We don't just see a bauble; we see light reflecting off a mirrored globe. We see glitter as light reflects off it; without the millions of reflecting surfaces that make up the glitter, we would lose the tree altogether. We see something because we see light.

If you think of it, much of the Christmas story has been designed to act pretty much like glitter and tinsel. We don't ever see God *directly* because we can't. He's a spirit. But he does affect our senses as things interact with—reflect—something of His nature. For example, we don't see God when we enter a place of prayer but we sense something of his holiness and purity. Or another example: each time we encounter love, we sense something of God because the Bible says God is so characterised by love that He *is* love. Just as we see a bauble when light bounces off its

mirrored surface, so every time we feel love we have in fact encountered something emanating from a loving God.

And then we think of Jesus. While we cannot see God himself, we *can* see Jesus. The faith-soaked words of the Bible describe Jesus as the visible image of an *in*-visible God. Just as we see tinsel by the light it reflects, so we see God the Almighty when we look at Jesus. At Christmas, we don't just see a baby in a manger. We see a God who is so determined to change the world for the better that he become a tiny human babe in a manger, born in Bethlehem long ago. When we see Jesus healing, caring, mending, forgiving, we are in fact seeing a God doing just those same acts of redemption.

Today in the Church calendar we remember St John. He was a master storyteller but also a theologian of unfathomable depth. His major insights are the way we can see God because of the way actions and words, signs and symbols, point beyond themselves to truth—just like light bouncing off a mirror tells us a mirror is there and that the mirror is shiny, so John teaches that love points beyond itself to God. And his second insight comes from the first: it's about light. We discern Jesus living in our lives just like we discern light in a room: it reveals, illuminates and makes safe. We can see God for who He is; we can see beyond love to the love that He is and the love He sponsors. That light can make safe any level of darkness.

This Christmas, all of us can enjoy the sounds and sights, the smells and tastes of Christmas. The reason we repeat the traditions of Christmas is the way they evoke so powerful a response in us. That power comes directly from the God they point us toward. Like light reflecting off a bauble, the satisfaction we sense at Christmas comes from the way these senses of Christmas help reflect the very character of God. We can see the sights and we hear the sounds ... and we *will* enjoy them. Or we can look and hear and realise they point beyond themselves to God.

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

Rejoicing in the love and life of God made visible among us,
let us pray to Jesus, the only-begotten Son.

Bread of life,
your beloved disciple John has brought us your living word,
inspire all evangelists and teachers to build up your Church ...

Light of the world,
illuminate the dark places of this world,
where sin, violence and death cast their shadow over human lives ...

Door of the sheepfold,
protect all who are in trouble or danger,
and give grace to our loved ones, families and friends ...

Way, truth and life,
minister to all who are lost, misguided or without faith;
bind up the broken, and give rest to the weary ...

Resurrection and the life,
raise us up at the last day
with all who have gone before us in faith,
with those whom we love but see no longer,
with John and all your saints,
that in your Father's house we may come to the place you have prepared for us.

Incarnate Lord, accept these our prayers for the sake of your most holy name.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

Jesus says, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.'

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Jesus good above all other (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

Grace from the eternal Father be with you;
grace from the Word made flesh be with you;
grace from the Spirit of truth be with you;
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 Come and join the celebration (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.

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere,
mighty creator, ever-living God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord;
for he is the Word before all creation,
the Life made manifest,
the Light who shines in the darkness.
He is the living Bread who has come down from heaven,
the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep,
the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
He stands among us in his risen power,
and shows us his hands and his side.
With joy we worship him as our Lord and our God.
Therefore with all the angels of heaven
we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name
and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

**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 St John 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

Grant, O Lord, we pray,
that the Word made flesh
proclaimed by your apostle John
may, by the celebration of these holy mysteries,
ever abide and live within us;
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.