

Sunday 12 December 2021

The Third Sunday of Advent



Sermon © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Prayers of intercession © [Subversive Undercroft](#).

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Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.
- 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 As with gladness men of old (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.

When the Lord comes he will bring to light things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.

Therefore, in the light of Christ,

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.

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 Collect for the Third Sunday of Advent

O Lord Jesus Christ,
who at your first coming sent your messenger
to prepare your way before you:
grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries
may likewise so prepare and make ready your way
by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,
that at your second coming to judge the world
we may be found an acceptable people in your sight;
for you are alive and reign with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

First reading

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Zephaniah

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord. *Zephaniah 3:14–20*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Philippians

My brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever

I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. *Philippians 4:1-13*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 In dulci jubilo

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptised by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'

The crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' Even tax collectors came to be baptised, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.'

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptise you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.' So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. *Luke 3:7-18*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

We're in the season of Advent. By tradition, the Church uses this season to focus on meeting with Jesus. There are many ways in which can meet with him.

The Advent season ends with Christmas. The period of waiting during Advent promotes our meeting with the baby Jesus and makes it more fruitful. Advent, used well, is a time to think of why God chose to come to earth as a baby, why He needed to come at all, how to respond, how to 'meet with him' at all. That's the first focus.

The second and related focus of Advent is meeting with Jesus at the end of time—the Second Coming. That phrase 'end of time' could refer to the end of human history but it might mean the end of our own time, customised ... so when we die. At that encounter, Jesus will not appear as a baby but as a judge and Lord. If we use Advent wisely, that encounter will be the same as that described in Matthew 25, with Jesus saying to us, 'Well done good and faithful servant. Come and enter [Heaven] and share my happiness!' Advent, used wisely, is therefore a time to think of how to achieve that positive outcome, and what to do if we sense it won't be.

These encounters act much look bookends: meeting with a past Christ and with a future Christ. Our entire life—the duration of our discipleship—occurs between these extremes. So while the third theme of Advent is usually ignored, we need to consider our meeting with Christ in the present. That encounter is easy to define.

We meet with Jesus everywhere. In Matthew 25, for example, Jesus gave a story that we often call 'The parable of the sheep and goats.' At its conclusion, Jesus describes a King saying to the people assembled before him in judgement, 'That which you did to the least of these, you did it for me.' By means of this parable, Jesus is saying the soul of every human being contains a spark of divinity—the Holy Spirit. We therefore encounter God each time we encounter a fellow human being. That human could be a member of our family, or a friend, but it could represent a complete stranger or even an enemy.

That we meet with Jesus when we meet with fellow human beings has implications. It must have. It means that God mandates us to treat our neighbours as we would like to be treated. I don't mean worship them but I do mean reverence. It means we should feel compelled to intervene when we see human beings being mistreated. We rationalise ourselves into re-inventing the great commandment.

In the Church calendar, today we celebrate the third Sunday of Advent. The principal theme of today's lectionary readings is John the Baptist. And the kernel of John's message was the twin-themed requirement to prepare our soul to meet with God in judgement and to point out who Jesus is. These themes are related: we meet with Jesus and ultimately will be judged on how we respond when we meet him.

In effect, that was John's message. He's saying, 'Behave to your neighbour as though you are meeting with God himself, because God is watching.' It's difficult to read the story in today's Gospel in other ways. Did we respond with joy to their joy and with tears with their tears. Did we meet with Jesus hidden in our neighbour with prayers of love? Did we say thank you for the saints we met on the journey?

One final thought. We are the Church of Christ. The Church explores a great many metaphors to explain itself, but one in particular seems to dominate the New Testament. We are the body of Christ. Jesus is present in new and more intimate ways whenever we come together. Think of our prayer. Think of our worship. Think of the Eucharist. Stated otherwise, we as Christians meet with Jesus in a yet further way. In therefore, therefore, we can ask of ourselves, was our worship actually worship and did it bring worth to the Christ at its core? Did we respond to the Jesus wrapped in our praises or hidden while mysteriously present in our sacraments?

We are the people of God and we will be judged on how we behave when we meet with Jesus, just as all people everywhere have. We will meet him in many ways. We will meet with him at Christmas as a babe. We will meet with him at the end of time. We will meet with him in friend and neighbour, family and foe. We will meet with him here in worship.

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

Lord have mercy.

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

The voice of God cries out in the wilderness, calling us to a transformed way of living. Let us respond to this invitation through the offering of our prayers.

Come to us, Holy Comforter, with your promise to bring a new heaven and a new earth to your people, saving us from the fires of sin and despair, and offering to us the solemn gifts of grace and salvation.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come into the hearts of your people, that we may turn from our selfish consumption of fossil fuels, our waste of food and clothing, our recklessness with money, and our carelessness with the gifts of creation.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come into the body of the Church and make us a baptising community, that multitudes may hear your message of repentance and hope, and receive your free gift of eternal love.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come with your Holy Spirit, into the hearts of those who are unemployed, abused, poorly educated, and who are persecuted for their faith, and awaken hope.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to young people everywhere, that they may have a desire to study your commandments and to exercise ministry in the world outside the Church

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to those with power, and to all who exercise offices of authority; that wisdom may be their guide, and that true love of their people may direct their decisions.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to those we love but see no more and gather them into your heavenly rest.

All Come, Lord Jesus.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

May the God of peace make you completely holy, ready for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 [Wexford carol](#)

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

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May God the Father, judge all-merciful,
make us worthy of a place in his kingdom.

May God the Son, coming among us in power,
reveal in our midst the promise of his glory.

May God the Holy Spirit make us steadfast in faith,
joyful in hope and constant in love

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 [Longing for light](#)

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

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

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts;
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit
that when your Christ comes again
we may shine as lights before his face;
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.

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.