

Sunday 19 December 2021

The Fourth Sunday of Advent



Sermon © Pete Haslam.

Prayers of intercession © Priests for Life.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

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 [Infant holy, infant lowly](#)

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

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 Fourth Sunday of Advent

God our redeemer,
who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of your Son:
grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour,
so we may be ready to greet him
when he comes again as our judge;
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 First Book of Kings

Now you are walled around with a wall; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the ruler of Israel upon the cheek. But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace. If the Assyrians come into our land and tread upon our soil, we will raise against them seven shepherds and eight installed as rulers.

Micah 5:1-5

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

When Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, "See, God, I have come to do your will, O God" (in the scroll of the book it is written of me).' When he said above, 'You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings' (these are offered according to the law), he added, 'See, I have come to do your will.' He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. *Hebrews 10:5-10*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Gaudate

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with

the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.' *Luke 1:39-45*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

I want to take us back over three thousand years, in the Holy land the political situation was grim. The population was divided. The current leader of the nation was so very different from the former one, who had catered to the desires of the masses and permitted very perverse practices to weaken worship of the true God and shatter family harmony. He had made alliances with foreign powers that many distrusted, and had weakened the military. The new leader was entirely different and had alienated many with his nationalism and traditional religious practice. He had torn up or torn down many of the institutions put in place by his predecessor. He had begun rebuilding walls to defend his nation against what many called a foreign invasion. But he did so without the unanimous consent of his people, especially the rich and the elite. Thus the people were politically, religiously, and culturally alienated as much as they had ever been in their history. The former king, Ahaz, persecuted those who were faithful to the God of Abraham and Moses. Yet God rescued him, however, even though he didn't deserve rescue, and gave him a new son, now the king, Hezekiah. Hezekiah became one of the handful of good kings in the land of Judah, but he led a divided people, many of whom missed the good old days when they could worship the gods made by their hands, and worship in their own way.

The faithful minority prayed, and were heartened by the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah. They believed God would act, but not through the rich, the powerful, the famous. He would not be seen as the God of Jerusalem, the big city. No, he would act in the same way he acted hundreds of years before when he sent the prophet-priest Samuel off to the hill country, to a village called Bethlehem. Where Samuel had anointed, a red-headed boy named David, who became the second and greatest king of his people. God would act in a similar manner in the time of His choosing, when a woman would give birth to another anointed who would bring together God's people and be great all the way to the ends of the earth.

This ruler would be unlike David, who was sometimes a great sinner, or all the other merely human kings of Israel and Judah. He would be a sinless man born of

a sinless mother. He would have only one goal—to do the will of God the Father, God His father. And by His will, one with the will of God, we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, whose body we will share in communion. Only Jesus Christ, could save us from sin and bring us all together to pray that God's will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. So, in the fullness of time, when every political manoeuvre had been tried by the people of the Old Covenant, when the only peace known was a kind of oppressive stability imposed under the boot of Roman legions, God took on a weak human nature. He did so by sending His messenger to a teenage virgin in the nothing village of Nazareth, a young maiden named Mary. Who would be the mother of the Messiah, the mother of the Redeemer, the promised Second Eve. She would be the Queen Mother of Israel, the woman beloved of God, and, because of the life and death and Resurrection of her Son, the Mother of Mercy and of Grace. She would have a dignity beyond that of any other woman, blessed among women.

And so what does she immediately do? The angel had told her that her elderly cousin, Elizabeth, thought to be unable to have children, was already in her sixth month of pregnancy. She arose and went 'with haste' to Elizabeth's hamlet. Now it wasn't just down the road a mile or two. It was about a week away by foot, down the Jordan valley and up a barren stretch called the 'valley of death.' She probably joined a caravan for protection, and arrived, footsore and weary and newly pregnant, to hear Elizabeth prophetically call her 'the mother of my Lord' and her tiny embryonic child 'the blessed fruit of thy womb.' Even John the Baptist, growing inside the womb of his mother Elizabeth, did a little dance of joy. And then Mary intoned the song, 'My soul magnifies the Lord ... for He has looked on the lowliness of His servant ... all generations shall call me blessed.'

In other words, Mary, in her poverty, shared her blessing and the work of her hands with someone even poorer and needier than she was—an elderly woman about to give birth for the first time.

So what can we take away from these beautiful, but remote stories of God's working among humans? First of all, whatever your political philosophy or party, remember that politics is not going to bring peace on earth and good will to humans. It never has and it never will, because most politicians are in it for what power and glory and mis-management they can get for themselves. Only the power of God, working in individual minds and hearts to convert them and attune them to do His will, can bring peace and goodness and beauty and truth to our world. So we have to pray for our own conversion and healing, and for the conversion and healing of Gods children.

Second, as we prepare for Christmas, we have to remember that the gift of God is the gift we should want for ourselves and those we love. And that this gift is not a thing, but a person. So if we have sins that need repenting, we need to confess them and be absolved and be prepared for Christ's coming. All of us are sinners in need of Christ's forgiveness, and He wants to give it to us. So make your plans today if possible for attending Communion on Christmas eve or day and celebrate the true gift of God to man.

And finally, give gifts to the poor. Time, if you can spare it, money if you have any. Jesus came to the poor first of all, and then to the rich kings. Jesus is a gift for all. Help Him share with those who are homeless and in need. Then your Christmas will truly be life changing, and not just for yourself. Amen.

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

As we approach the celebration of the birth of our Saviour, let us turn our hearts and minds to the Father, with confidence in his generous love and mercy:

That the Church will faithfully proclaim the Word of God to every part of the world, we pray to the Lord ...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

That Government leaders will be responsive to the needs of their people, especially families with young children, we pray to the Lord...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

That all who are pregnant and afraid may welcome the life within them, and draw strength from the angel Gabriel's words to Mary: Do not fear, we pray to the Lord ...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

That the poor, the lonely, and the neglected will experience God's love during this joyful season through the kindness of others, we pray to the Lord ...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

That all who are busy making preparations to celebrate Christmas will take time to reflect on God's love for them, we pray to the Lord ...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

For those who have died, that as they shared our Christmas joy on earth, they may come to enjoy eternal glory in God's kingdom, we pray to the Lord ...

All Amen. We pray to the Lord.

Almighty God, prepare our hearts with your grace, that like Mary, we may be a worthy dwelling place for your Son. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

All Amen.

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 The rocking 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 The angel Gabriel came down

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

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

Heavenly Father,
who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of the promised saviour:
fill us your servants with your grace,
that in all things we may embrace your holy will
and with her rejoice in your salvation;
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.