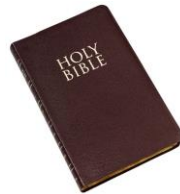


SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT

15th NOVEMBER 2020

We're again in lock down; churches have been told to close until 2 December and we don't know what will happen then. So you'll need your worship space again. Find your candle, your Bible and cross and use this service to focus your hearts and minds on God.



INTRODUCTION

How is your second lockdown going? It's not the same as the first time, is it? I notice the traffic on Bolton Road: first time round it diminished to virtually nothing. It was wonderful to hear all the birds for a change, and they enjoyed the peace and quiet! This time there's been virtually no slackening off. It's not quite as heavy as before this all started but you wouldn't know we're all supposed to be staying home.

Mentally I think we're finding it harder too. There was a sense of novelty before and people thought of ways to pass the time. Gardens never looked as spruce and colourful. That doesn't work in November. I'm still trying to clear the leaves from the three Vicarage lawns. Not a very creative task but it gets me outside, I suppose.

There's more of a groundswell of opinion against closing churches and other places of worship this time. We have been so careful about distancing and masking in church. I haven't heard of a single case of anyone being infected through a church contact. But we are closed at the moment so we have to do what we can in our own homes.

If you can find a rhythm for each day that includes prayer you'll keep that vital lifeline open. I hope this service also gives you time to think and pray, to offer up to God all that is happening – or not happening – to you and asking his blessing.

It's a time to think about the world and all that's going on there. And to reflect on God's creative love. Although we may seem far from it, especially as we look the climate emergency in the eye, the message from scripture is that we are never far from it. We just need to spot it in our own lives and in the lives of others.

As we approach Advent we can use this period of isolation to focus on God's love, especially in the life and saving work of Jesus.

With every blessing

Revd Jan

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

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

CONFESSION



Let us take time to reflect on the last week and say sorry to God for the things we have done or not done.

**Almighty God our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour
in thought 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**

ABSOLUTION

May almighty God who sent his son into the world to save sinners,
bring us his pardon and peace, now and forever. Amen

GLORIA

**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 sins of the world: have mercy upon 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 COLLECT

Heavenly Lord, you long for the world's salvation: stir us from apathy,
restrain us from excess and revive in us new hope that all creation will one day be
healed in Jesus Christ our Lord.

OLD TESTAMENT READING Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

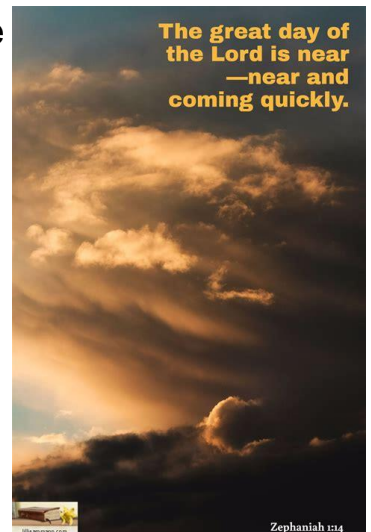
Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is at hand; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice he has consecrated his guests.

At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do harm.'

Their wealth shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.

The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.

I will bring such distress upon people that they shall walk like the blind; because they have sinned against the LORD, their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath; in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed; for a full, a terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.



This is the word of the Lord – **Thanks be to God**



NEW TESTAMENT READING 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you.

For you, yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!



But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.

So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night.

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

This is the word of the Lord – **Thanks be to God**

GOSPEL Matthew 25, 14-30

Hear the Gospel of Christ according to Matthew –**Glory to you O Lord**



For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, “Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.”

But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest.

So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord – **Praise to you O Christ**

REFLECTION

This month is dedicated to God’s kingdom and remembering. We have already had All Saints, All Souls and Remembrance Sunday, and the theme continues into today being prepared for God’s kingdom even though we do not know when that will be.

The Old Testament reading is full of fire and brimstone likened to a 18th and 19th century preacher’s sermon, but the epistle is much softer explaining that the darkness will not affect God’s people as they have been prepared for salvation not punishment.

We have all heard of the parable of the talents before. This was a name for a sum of money but today we use it to mean a skill or gift. A talent was a very large sum of money worth 15 years wages for a slave, it must have seemed extraordinary for a slave to be given any money let alone this much. The Master must have been very sure of their trust and faithfulness. The first two servants invested the money wisely and managed to double the gift and their master rewarded them with promotion. It was obviously too much for the third slave to cope with and he just protected it. So he incurred the wrath of his employer by not using it to make more money and he was punished mercilessly.

This seems very harsh but Jesus was using the analogy to our gifts and talents given by God, do we use them for good? Do we hide them? Do we just use them for ourselves? What should we do with them and how do we recognise them. Well we all have something to give, it may be money that can be shared with charity, it may be that you are a good listener or a good friend to those who are in need. Some people use their talents in their job and choose to work in a service orientated profession like teachers, ministers, solicitors, health workers etc. Or we may just do our everyday jobs with integrity and respect for others and always be honest and hardworking.

The lesson is saying that we will be judged on how we have used our gifts to serve God and other people. Sometimes we don't have the confidence but others notice that we have a talent. So listen and give it a go, you never know where it will lead, ALM? Reader? Intercessions? PCC? Helping in any of the church's work. Don't be shy! We need help in many aspects of our church and community. Have a think how your talents might be put to good use. Good luck.


Jan B

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and 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 into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there 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 life everlasting. Amen.



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PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

During the intercessions, we pray for the church, our country, our government, people in difficulty and those who have died. You can use your own prayers or if you *prefer here are some on today's theme.*



In the power of the Holy Spirit and in Union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, for you have given us all talents and abilities. You have created each of us in a unique way, that we may give our own unique service and talents to you. Blessed are you Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Lord giver of all good gifts, we thank you for all you have given us. May we share our talents and use them to the benefit of others and for your glory. We pray today for all who tell others of your love and proclaim the gospel and of our ministry teams here at St. Maxentius and our Turton Moorland team.

Lord in your mercy- **Hear our prayer.**

Lord giver of all good gifts we ask your blessing upon artists, musicians, craftspeople, gardeners, architects, politicians and all who use their gifts to improve our world. We remember all who are unable to use their talents to the full through oppression or other circumstances.

Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer**

Lord giver of all good gifts, bless us and our loved ones. We pray that are homes may be places where talent is fostered and given a chance to grow. We ask your blessing upon all schools and places of learning and all who help others to develop skills.

Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer**

Lord giver of all good gifts, bless all who are thwarted in their ability through illness, oppression or the lack of opportunity. We pray for all who are struggling due to poverty and hunger and those that are ill. We pray for all who care for the sick and hungry, medical staff, carers charities and especially at this time those working in hospitals, may they have the strength and talents to help those in need.

Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer**

Lord giver of all good gifts, we thank you for the gift of life eternal. We rejoice in the fellowship of all your saints and ask your blessing on our loved ones departed, that they may be at home with you in your kingdom of love.

Merciful Father – **Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

PEACE



THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer

Our father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as it is 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.



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THE BLESSING

May God give to us and to all those we love, his comfort and peace, his light and his joy, in this world and the next; and the blessing of God almighty the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us now and forever. **Amen.**

