

Christ Church

High Harrogate



A Parish service for when we're
UNITED but **APART**
for



Second Sunday before Advent

19th November 2023

Welcome to Christ Church, praying and united, with the whole Church of God ; may this bring a blessing upon your home, as also upon the needs of loved ones and the world,

THIS SERVICE is taken in the main from the service we *would have had* today at 10am but is intended also to be accessible as if at 8am. We make our prayers with and for all whom we would have met in worship today - welcoming us at the door, talking with us, sitting beside us, singing for us to lead us, and guiding us in prayer.

We build upon all that we have shared and shared still, as now we rejoice in our renewal in Christ's grace, gather as the Church, and unite in fellowship, proclamation and prayer from the place of our own homes.

Be it 8am or 10am or other _ still, maybe, the wisdom to quieten our mobile phone  and be very much in prayer .

Please sit very comfortably.

Please feel free to sing ; and maybe to speak some parts of this prayer time out-loud _ you may find it surprisingly helpful.

Please, above all, simply know that we are all together ; and as we pray where we are now, so do many many more, across the town, across these towns, and across the world,

The Lord is here.

His Spirit is with us.

Matthew

The Greeting

In welcome of one-another, near or far -

In the name of Jesus Christ,
who died and was raised
to the glory of God the Father,
may the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all.
[And also with you.]

Prayers of Penitence

Christ calls us to share the
heavenly banquet of his love
with all the saints in earth and heaven.
Knowing the burden of error, mistake and sin,
let us turn to God
in the promise of mercy and forgiveness,
and confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God's commandments
and to live in love and peace with all.

- Silence is kept for a short time, in Confession and Prayer.



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**

In recalling and knowing Absolution from God -

May God our Father forgive us our sins
and bring us to the eternal joy of his kingdom,
where dust and ashes have no dominion.

All Amen.

The Collect



Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son was revealed
to destroy the works of the devil
and to make us the children of God
and heirs of eternal life :
grant that we, having this hope,
may purify ourselves even as he is pure ;
that when he shall appear in power and great glory
we may be made like him
in his eternal and glorious kingdom ;
where he is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

The Liturgy of the Word



The First 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.

New Revised Standard Version

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJy9JEWx4xc&t=10s>

**From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled ;
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.**



*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

**There in the garden of tears,
my heavy load he chose to bear ;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.**

This is our God ...

**Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.**

This is our God ...

**So let us learn how to serve,
and in our lives enthrone him ;
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.**

This is our God ...

Words and music : Graham Kendrick (b 1950)

The Second Reading - *1 Thessalonians 5 : 1 - 11*

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.

New Revised Standard Version

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

The Gospel Reading

Matthew 25 : 14 - 30



The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'The kingdom of heaven 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".'

New Revised Standard Version

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All Praise to you, O Christ.



Zephaniah really warms to his subject, doesn't he ? He starts off quite measured _ gives interesting warning :

"I will search Jerusalem ... I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs [nice phrase] those who say in their heart, 'The Lord will not do good, nor will he do harm'. Their wealth shall be plundered and ___" - dot - dot - dot.

- Then he gets into his lists - and I don't know what it is about 'lists' _ be they 'work', 'Christmas Card', 'shopping', or 'wrongdoing' ___ they always seem to grow - - - and he certainly goes with it.

- The New Testament ___ Much more positive. Full of encouragement and encouraging encouragement. How much more encouraging can you get ?! - But still open, still realistic : but praising a truth - - - *"Hey, you're of the light _ believe it _ look at it ___ you're sitting in it, bathed in it - from your heart outwards and your neighbour in - right now. Oh yes _ be encouraged _ by such truth."*

The Gospel _ Well the Gospel, unsurprisingly, does both _____ every encouragement but no punches pulled.

Don't run past the first words :

"The Kingdom of heaven..."

- That's what we're talking about. That's where we're directed. That's the promise :

- *"is as if a man..."* - Okay, is it fair to say 'God' ?

"summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them;"

- So what is the 'property' of God ?

Maybe everything. But let's define that. Creation _ okay, but more _ _ _ In the inimitable words of Phil Oakey, in the *'Human League'*, 1986 :

*“I’m only human, of flesh and blood I’m made,
I’m only human, born to make mistakes.”*

- At This point in the Church year we are drawing together All that God has promised faithfully and eternally _ Old and New, Then and into our tomorrows. Next week we celebrate it all in ‘Christ the King’ ; before we begin the reception and celebration of it all over again, with what ? ____ the Incarnation.

We, know God as so much more than a ‘something’, even more than a ‘promise’, outside of and beyond our creation. We know of God who loves creation and becomes a part of it _ bringing that light and an extraordinary peace, and ultimate security.

God becomes human.

We’re made in the Image of God - so our Scripture, our reason, our experience say - and Jesus, the Christ, shows us how.

What is the 'property' of God which he entrusts to us ?

- Yes it’s flesh and blood ____ but it’s such a wealth of so much more. *“Talents”* _ which were 'then' a huge sum of money. *“Talents”* _ from then, for us _ as our gifts, our skills, our inventiveness, perception, aptitude : it is from this scripture that we receive our use of the word in this way.

As a friend of mine observed, we all sometimes suffer from ‘Gift Envy’. We think everyone - *or everyone We think is important* - has so much More than us _ is more than us, with more to offer - - - that they have ‘5’ and we have ‘1’. We dismiss the recognition that those upon whom we look probably think exactly the same of us ____ . But Whatever we have, the call is to be active with it, put what We have to good use. As it says elsewhere in Scripture _ be Hot,

be Cold, but don't be lukewarm ; don't *'rest complacently on the dregs, saying in our heart 'God will not do good, nor will he do harm.'*

Be faithful, not faithless or even unfaithful.

If these skills and talents which make us human are Of God _ then that is where they will find their fulfilment, and bring their ultimate reward.

You are so much more than flesh and blood ____ and if we make mistakes _ then in turning faithfully to our Master we find the path to be forgiveness in that 'turning' ; and more than that he walks with us as we do so.

Denying our talents does not make them go away. It only prevents them from flourishing ____ which can at best surely only be frustrating.

Denying God _ only closes our eyes ____ which in effect only turns off the light.

But in the words of St Paul :

"You are not in darkness _ you are children of light"

- Today, is the day when we can open our eyes, our heart, our mind and then our hands _ not only to receive how we are gifted ____ but to use such unique, incarnate gifts in being now the body of Christ. God incarnate in our world.

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

Amen.

Revd Matthew Evans

The Prayers of Intercession



As children and pilgrims of a loving God who always listens to our cries, we are invited to come before God, in all that we are, and with all the prayer we need make.

We pray for the coming of God's kingdom.



You sent your Son to bring good news to the poor, sight to the blind, freedom to captives and salvation to your people :
anoint us with your Spirit ; rouse us to work in your name.

Father, by your Spirit - bring in your kingdom.

Send us to bring help to the poor
and freedom to the oppressed.

Father, by your Spirit - bring in your kingdom.

Send us to tell the world
the good news of your healing love.

Father, by your Spirit - bring in your kingdom.

Send us to those who mourn,
to bring joy and gladness instead of grief.

Father, by your Spirit - bring in your kingdom.

Give to the world and its peoples
the peace that comes from above,
that all may find Christ's way of freedom and life.

Father, by your Spirit - bring in your kingdom.

Remember in your mercy all those gone before us who have
been well-pleasing to you from eternity ; by name :

Yvonne Hutchings ; Ian Kerr ;

preserve in your faith your servants on earth,
guide us to your kingdom and grant us your peace at all times ;

hear our prayer for all Confirmed today : Chloe, Katie, Ewan,
Charlotte, Bethany, Hannah, Holly, Tegan, Richard, David, Gianluca,
Simon, Simon :

Father, by your Spirit - bring in your kingdom.

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. 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 Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father ;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven, was incarnate from
the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate ;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures ;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aj0IMXQ2npl>

**Soldiers of Christ, arise,
and put your armour on,
strong in the strength which God supplies
through his eternal Son ;**



**Strong in the Lord of hosts,
and in his mighty power :
who in the strength of Jesus trusts
is more than conqueror.**

**Stand then in his great might,
with all his strength endued,
and take, to arm you for the fight,
the panoply of God.**

**From strength to strength go on,
wrestle and fight and pray ;
tread all the powers of darkness down
and win the well-fought day.**

**That, having all things done,
and all your conflicts past,
ye may obtain, through Christ alone,
a crown of joy at last.**

*Words : Charles Wesley (1707-1788)
Tune : St Ethelwald*

The Blessing



May Christ the Son of God
perfect in us the image of his glory
and gladden our hearts
with the good news of his kingdom ;
and may the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.
Amen.

The Peace

We are fellow-citizens with the saints
and of the household of God, through Christ our Lord,
who came and preached peace to those who were far off
and to those who were near.

Please look to your ROOM and HOME _

--- please look from your WINDOW ---

In our place, heart and home, and to all the world :

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

{ - and also with you. Alleluia }

The Dismissal

So let us go into the day in peace ;
and may we love and serve the Lord
in the name of Christ. Amen.

Thank you for joining in this prayer.