

Morning Prayer – 2nd Sunday of Advent

5th December 2021, from The Book of Common Prayer

Hymn – Long ago, prophets knew

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPGN-k9yuJQ>

Long ago, prophets knew
Christ would come, born a Jew,
come to make all things new;
bear his people's burden,
freely love and pardon.

Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!
Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!
When he comes,
when he comes,
who will make him welcome?

God in time, God in man,
this is God's timeless plan:
He will come, as a man,
born himself of woman,
God divinely human.

Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring.....

Journey ends! Where afar
Bethlehem shines, like a star,
stable door stands ajar.
unborn Son of Mary,
Saviour, do not tarry!

:

Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!
Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!
Jesus comes!
Jesus comes!
We will make him welcome!

Opening prayers

God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God and God in him.

1 John 4.16

Beloved, we are come together in the presence of almighty God and of the whole company of heaven to offer unto him through our Lord Jesus Christ our worship and praise and thanksgiving; to make confession of our sins; to pray, as well for others as for ourselves, that we may know more truly the greatness of God's love and shew forth in our lives the fruits of his grace; and to ask on behalf of all men such things as their well-being doth require.

Wherefore let us kneel in silence, and remember God's presence with us now.

**Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.
We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own
hearts.
We have offended against thy holy laws.
We have left undone those things
which we ought to have done;
and we have done those things which we ought not to have done;
and there is no health in us.
But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders.
Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults.
Restore thou them that are penitent;
according to thy promises declared unto mankind
in Christ Jesu our Lord.
And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,
that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,
to the glory of thy holy name.
Amen.**

Pause

Grant, we beseech thee, merciful Lord,
to thy faithful people pardon and peace,
that they may be cleansed from all their sins,
and serve thee with a quiet mind;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our Father, which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And 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.

O Lord, open thou our lips
and our mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

O God, make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

Praise ye the Lord.
The Lord's name be praised.

Venite, exultemus Domino

O come, let us sing unto the Lord,
let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.

Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving
and shew ourselves glad in him with psalms.

For the Lord is a great God
and a great King above all gods.

In his hand are all the corners of the earth
and the strength of the hills is his also.

The sea is his, and he made it
and his hands prepared the dry land.

O come, let us worship, and fall down
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.

For he is the Lord our God
and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :
world without end. Amen.

Old Testament Lesson

Malachi 3.1-4

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

New Testament Lesson

Philippians 1:3 - 11

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel.

For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Benedictus

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel
for he hath visited, and redeemed his people;

And hath raised up a mighty salvation for us
in the house of his servant David;

As he spake by the mouth of his holy Prophets
which have been since the world began;

That we should be saved from our enemies
and from the hands of all that hate us;

To perform the mercy promised to our forefathers
and to remember his holy covenant;

To perform the oath which he sware to our forefather Abraham
that he would give us,
That we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies
might serve him without fear,

In holiness and righteousness before him
all the days of our life.

And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest
for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

To give knowledge of salvation unto his people
for the remission of their sins;

Through the tender mercy of our God
whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us;

To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be
world without end. Amen.

Gospel Reading

Luke 3.1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” ’

Jubilate

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands
serve the Lord with gladness,
and come before his presence with a song.

Be ye sure that the Lord he is God
it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving,
and into his courts with praise
be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name.

For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting
and his truth endureth from generation to generation.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be
world without end. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth:
and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Ghost;
the holy catholic Church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

**Our Father, which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil. Amen.**

O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.
And grant us thy salvation.

O Lord, save the Queen.
And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.

Endue thy ministers with righteousness.
And make thy chosen people joyful.

O Lord, save thy people.
And bless thine inheritance.

Give peace in our time, O Lord.
**Because there is none other that fighteth for us,
but only thou, O God.**

O God, make clean our hearts within us.
And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

The Collect of the Day

O Lord, raise up we pray thee thy power and come among us,
and with great might succour us;
that whereas, through our sins and wickedness
we are sore let and hindered
in running the race that is set before us,
thy bountiful grace and mercy
may speedily help and deliver us;
through the satisfaction of thy Son our Lord,
to whom with thee and the Holy Spirit
be honour and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Collect for Peace

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord,
in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life,
whose service is perfect freedom;
defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies;
that we, surely trusting in thy defence,
may not fear the power of any adversaries;
through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect for Grace

O Lord, our heavenly Father,
almighty and everlasting God,
who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day;
defend us in the same with thy mighty power;
and grant that this day we fall into no sin,
neither run into any kind of danger,
but that all our doings may be ordered by thy governance,
to do always that is righteous in thy sight;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn – Hills of the North, rejoice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5LOPA7EqF0>

Hills of the North, rejoice;
river and mountain spring,
hark to the advent voice;
valley and lowland, sing;
though absent long, your Lord is nigh;
he judgment brings and victory.

Isles of the southern seas,
deep in your coral caves
pent be each warring breeze,
lulled be your restless waves:
he comes to reign with boundless sway,
and makes your wastes his great highway.

Lands of the East, awake,
soon shall your sons be free;
the sleep of ages break,
and rise to liberty.
on your far hills, long cold and grey,
has dawned the everlasting day.

Shores of the utmost West,
ye that have waited long,
unvisited, unblest,
break forth to swelling song;
high raise the note, that Jesus died,
yet lives and reigns, the Crucified.

Shout, while ye journey home;
songs be in every mouth;
lo, from the North we come,
from East, and West, and South.
City of God, the bond are free,
we come to live and reign in thee!

Sermon

One of the themes of Advent is that Jesus' coming was about changing our lives for the better. And today we have this theme emerging from John the Baptist crying out in the wilderness. He wants all his listeners to be happier, more joyful – released from the things that hold them back, and enabled to receive God's salvation.

However another theme of Advent can be that of judgement – at the end of time everyone will be judged to see if they are worthy to go to heaven. And if they are not, they will be punished with eternal damnation.

Together, these two themes can be summarised as the carrot and stick – approaches used to getting a stubborn donkey to move. Dangle a carrot, and if the donkey moves, give it to the donkey to reward it for good behaviour. Alternatively, use the stick to beat it into action.

Which is more effective? Which is at the heart of the Christian gospel?

Over the centuries Christians have often emphasised just one theme – the stick. In the Orkney Saga, written about the Vikings invading Orkney, there was a Christian Viking leader who offered the people of Orkney a straight choice – either you convert to Christianity, or your heads will be chopped off. They converted!

The dramatic and painful punishment of sinners is a common theme in mediaeval wall paintings and carvings, where the jaws of hell swallow-up all the sinners.

Such paintings would have been partly inspired by today's gospel reading where John the Baptist calls for repentance.

Repent or else is his cry – and it sounds like he is using it just like a stick – but he isn't, he is encouraging his listeners to seek forgiveness, to find a better life, to be freed from their sins.

Sadly, in many Christians – in particular those who are sure of a place in heaven – there is a streak of self-righteousness, relishing the idea of all those evil people being punished for their wickedness. Serve them right!

Indeed this is a common theme in society today – everyone who has committed a crime needs to be punished according to its severity.

Is the heart of Christianity a stick? I don't think so.

What I see in the gospels and throughout the New Testament, is people being drawn to God by his love. Jesus attracting people to God by showing he cares for them, and wanting to bring joy into their lives.

Paul seeing “love that overflows more and more with knowledge and full insight.”

And even in Malachi, we see God's desire that “the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord”.

The culmination of Advent with the birth, on Christmas Day, of an innocent, gentle baby, inspiring love in all those around him, has no hint of punishment or sticks, rather it is a celebration of deep and true love.

Love that overcomes all evil, and maps out a path for the salvation of the world.

A wonderful story of a child in a manger, Mary and Joseph, shepherds and kings, an ox and a donkey – and, of course, a carrot for the donkey!

Amen

Prayers

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

Almighty and ever-living God, who by thy holy apostle hast taught us to make prayers and supplications, and to give thanks, for all men: we humbly beseech thee most mercifully to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto thy divine majesty; beseeching thee to inspire continually the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity and concord; and grant that all they that do confess thy holy name may agree in the truth of thy holy word, and live in unity and godly love.

We beseech thee also to lead all nations in the way of righteousness and peace; and so to direct all kings and rulers, that under them thy people may be godly and quietly governed. And grant unto thy servant Elizabeth our Queen, and to all that are put in authority under her, that they may truly and indifferently administer justice, to the maintenance of thy true religion and virtue.

Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all bishops, priests and deacons, especially to thy servant Robert our bishop, that they may both by their life and doctrine set forth thy true and lively word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy sacraments.

Guide and prosper, we pray thee, those who are labouring for the spread of thy gospel among the nations, and enlighten with thy Spirit all places of education and learning; that the whole world may be filled with the knowledge of thy truth.

And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace; and specially to this congregation here present, that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear and receive thy holy word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

And we most humbly beseech thee of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succour all them who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

And we commend to thy gracious keeping, O Lord, all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear, beseeching thee, according to thy promises, to grant them refreshment, light and peace.

And here we give thee most high praise and hearty thanks for all thy saints, who have been the chosen vessels of thy grace, and lights of the world in their several generations; and we pray that, rejoicing in their fellowship and following their good examples, we may be partakers with them of thy heavenly kingdom.

Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only mediator and advocate. **Amen.**

A prayer for all those affected by Coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of thy mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from thy love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Silence

You may like to add your own prayer(s) at this point, perhaps focusing on those you are most concerned about.

Hymn – All over the world

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vF9h9n19yz0>

All over the world, the Spirit is moving,
All over the world, as the prophet said it would be;
All over the world, there's a mighty revelation,
Of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

All over his church, the Spirit is moving,
All over his church, as the prophet said it would be;
All over his church, there's a mighty revelation,
Of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Right here in this place, the Spirit is moving,
Right here in this place, as the prophet said it would be;
Right here in this place, there's a mighty revelation,
Of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea

All over the world, the Spirit is moving,
All over the world, as the prophet said it would be;
All over the world, there's a mighty revelation,
Of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Ending

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,
be with us all evermore.
Amen.