

Ashburton and Moorland Team

Advent 4

19th December 2021



¶ The Gathering

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Lighting of an Advent wreath or candle

Week 4. Mary, the mother of Jesus

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle;
to you be praise and glory for ever!

Your light has shone in our darkened world
through the child-bearing of blessed Mary;
grant that we who have seen your glory
may daily be renewed in your image
and prepared like her for the coming of your Son,
who is the Lord and Saviour of all.

Blessed be God for ever.

Amen.

Hymn – Hark the glad sound

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2blvj5-anE>

Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes,
the Saviour promised long!

Let every heart prepare a throne,
and every voice a song.

He comes the prisoners to release,
in Satan's bondage held;
the gates of brass before Him burst,
the iron fetters yield.

He comes the broken heart to bind,
the bleeding soul to cure,
and with the treasures of his grace,
to enrich the humbled poor.

Our glad Hosannas, Prince of Peace,
thy welcome shall proclaim;
and heaven's eternal arches ring,
with thy beloved Name.

Words: Philip Dodridge
1702 - 1751

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.**

Prayers of Penitence

The Summary of the Law

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.'

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.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Confession

When the Lord comes,
he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness,
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.
Therefore in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

**Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us,
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

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. **Amen.**

¶ The Liturgy of the Word

Readings

Micah 5.2-5a

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.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hebrews 10.5-10

Consequently, 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), then 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.

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Hymn – For Mary, mother of our Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWS-Jtaly7w>

For Mary, Mother of our Lord
God's holy name be praised,
who first the Son of God adored
as on her child she gazed.

The angel Gabriel brought the word
she should Christ's mother be;
our Lady, handmaid of the Lord,
made answer willingly.

The heavenly call she thus obeyed,
and so God's will was done;
the second Eve love's answer made
which our redemption won.

Dear Mary, from your lowliness
and home in Galilee,
there comes a joy and holiness
to every family.

Hail, Mary, you are full of grace,
above all women blest;
and blest your Son, whom your embrace
in birth and death confessed.

John Raphael Peacey
(1896 – 1971)

Gospel Reading

Alleluia, alleluia.

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Alleluia!

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

Luke 1.39-55

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 leapt 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. And 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 leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The Sermon

When Mary set off to visit Elizabeth, it sounds as though she was just bubbling with excitement. She couldn't wait to see her. She was dying to share the story that the angel had told her. She went with haste – a lovely phrase! Did she run? Or gallop on her donkey? Or just travel day and night? I wonder...

Or maybe it was just a matter of resisting the temptation to stop and chat to everyone she met on the road, telling them how excited she was about her baby. Particularly during lockdown, I found daily walks around the lanes and footpaths here were taking me twice as long as normal, because there were so many people to stop and chat with.

However she travelled, Mary speedily arrived, out of breath and excited.

She couldn't wait to see Elizabeth and share her good fortune with her. They were two very different ages – Elizabeth perhaps in her

sixties, Mary a teenager, but both pregnant, and both looking forward to the future that the angel had promised them.

I guess that for many of us, looking forward to the future is a key part of our happiness. Having something good to look forward to will always lift my mood. Holidays, Christmas, visits from friends, a planned meal out or a trip to a film or show. These are written large in the diaries, and I want the days to pass quickly so that they will arrive sooner...

But such happiness may turn out to be rather fragile. These days, with so many things being cancelled or uncertain, misery can come sneaking up rather than excitement.

Perhaps there's nothing more miserable than the cancellation of something we've been really looking forward to. Across the whole country, at present, I feel there's a sense of misery, as some cherished parts of Christmas are just evaporating, like a mirage vanishing. Christmas parties, meals out with friends and families, shows, events. The cancellation of such things feels really bad because we looked forward to them so much.

Misery is, however, a common enough theme in the bible, so we can learn some lessons from there. The prophet Micah, for example, was writing from exile at a time when the Israelites were all in exile, hundreds of miles from their familiar homes and countryside, bereft of all the security of a settled way of life and a familiar temple for worship. The people around him were miserable – they had nothing to look forward to.

However the prophet Micah had a vision of a brighter future, where Bethlehem would become the birth place of the "one who is to rule Jerusalem". Yet he knew it wouldn't be in his lifetime. He didn't promise Christmas next week, or even next year, rather it would be sometime in the distant future when Christmas came, when Jesus would be born.

A long-term prediction like this, that things will come together for good eventually, gives rise to a more stable emotional state than happiness, rather it brings hope.

A long-term hope that despite all the ups and downs of difficult times, like we are in now, God has a bigger picture where all will be well, where justice will prevail and good will win. Maybe not in our lifetime, but sooner or later.

The prophets' message was always of hope rather than happiness.

Mary had all sorts of hopes for her baby. However she would discover from Simeon when she took her new baby to the temple to be blessed, that Jesus would also bring her suffering, like a "sword piercing her soul" through his untimely death.

And yet Simeon gave her hope that Jesus would be the glory of the people of Israel!

Mary, during her life, rejoiced in her child and also suffered for her child. However she found that God was trustworthy, and so she placed all her trust in him. God was with her in her suffering, and helped her to be hopeful. And find peace.

We may feel that happiness is in short supply this Christmas, but our Christian faith promises us something deeper, more long-lasting – joy and hope brought to us once again by the baby in the stable.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

The Nicene Creed

***I / We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.***

***I / 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.**

The Peace

In the tender mercy of our God,
the dayspring from on high shall break upon us,
to give light to those who dwell in darkness
and in the shadow of death
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with us.

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....

Words: Philip Dodridge
1702 - 1751

Prayers of Intercession

United in the company of all the faithful
and looking for the coming of the kingdom,
let us offer our prayers to God,
the source of all life and holiness.

Merciful Lord,
strengthen all Christian people by your Holy Spirit,
that we may live as a royal priesthood and a holy nation
to the praise of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Bless Robert our bishop, and all ministers of your Church,
that by faithful proclamation of your word
we may be built on the foundation of the apostles
and prophets
into a holy temple in the Lord.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Empower us by the gift of your holy and life-giving Spirit,
that we may be transformed into the likeness of Christ
from glory to glory.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

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

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Hold in your embrace all who witness to your love in the
service of the poor and needy;
all those who minister to the sick and dying;
and all who bring light to those in darkness.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Touch and heal all those whose lives are scarred by sin
or disfigured by pain,
that, raised from death to life in Christ,
their sorrow may be turned to eternal joy.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Remember in your mercy all those gone before us,
who have been well-pleasing to you from eternity;
preserve in your faith your servants on earth,
guide us to your kingdom,
and grant us your peace at all times.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Hasten the day when many will come
from east and west, from north and south,
and sit at table in your kingdom.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We give you thanks
for the whole company of your saints in glory,
with whom in fellowship we join our prayers and praises;
by your grace may we, like them,
be made perfect in your love.

**Blessing and glory and wisdom,
thanksgiving and honour and power,
be to our God for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

**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.
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.**

(For those in church, the Eucharistic prayer comes here)

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!

Words: Charles Edward Oakley
(1832 - 1865)

¶ Ending

Eternal God,
comfort of the afflicted and healer of the broken,
teach us the ways of gentleness and peace,
that all the world may acknowledge
the kingdom of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Blessing

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon us,
scatter the darkness from before our path,
and make us ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.
Amen

