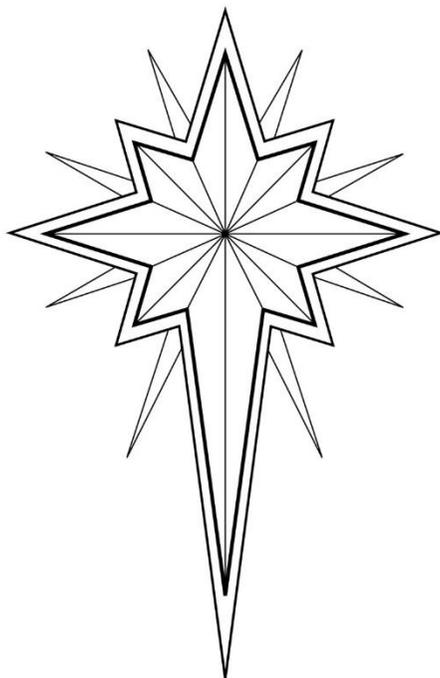


Ashburton and Moorland Team

Evening Worship

EPIPHANY 3

23rd January 2022



Preparation

¶ The Gathering

A light is brought in, or a candle may be lit.

The officiant greets the people with these or other suitable words

In the evening, Jesus came and stood among the disciples and said to them: 'Peace be with you.' *John 20:19*

The light and the peace of Jesus Christ be with you all
and also with you.

Blessed are you, sovereign God of all,
to you be glory and praise for ever.
In the darkness of this passing age,
your saints proclaim the glory of your kingdom,
revealed among us in Christ our light.
Open our eyes to behold your presence
and join our song to those of the saints
in praise of all your marvellous deeds.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God for ever.

Hymn – Father, Lord of all Creation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7FAu0c_-NY

Father, Lord of all Creation,
ground of Being, Life and Love;
height and depth beyond description
only life in you can prove:
you are mortal life's dependence:
thought, speech, sight are ours by grace;
yours is every hour's existence,
sovereign Lord of time and space.

Jesus Christ, the Man for Others,
we, your people, make our prayer:
give us grace to love as brothers
all whose burdens we can share.
Where your name binds us together
you, Lord Christ, will surely be;
where no selfishness can sever
there your love may all men see.

Holy Spirit, rushing, burning
wind and flame of Pentecost,
fire our hearts afresh with yearning
to regain what we have lost.
May your love unite our action,
nevermore to speak alone:
God, in us abolish faction,
God, through us your love make known.

Prayers of Penitence

(Sit or kneel)

Jesus says, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'
So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ,
Confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

**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.**

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

Nehemiah 8. 1-3,5-6,8-10

All the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month.

He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen', lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

1 Corinthians 12.12-31a

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be?

As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'

On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

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

Hymn – Lord thy word abideth

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3-dMvkZM-A>

Lord, thy Word abideth,
and our footsteps guideth;
who its truth believeth
light and joy receiveth.

When our foes are near us,
then thy Word doth cheer us,
Word of consolation,
message of salvation.

When the storms are o'er us,
and dark clouds before us,
then its light directeth,
and our way protecteth.

Who can tell the pleasure,
who recount the treasure,
by thy Word imparted
to the simple-hearted?
Word of mercy, giving
succour to the living;
word of life, supplying
comfort to the dying!

O that we, discerning,
its most holy learning,
Lord, may love and fear thee,
evermore be near thee!

Gospel Reading

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

Luke 4.14-21

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

The Sermon

One of the dangers of getting older, and more forgetful, is that I’m finding more and more often that when I start telling a story that I think someone hasn’t heard, I see their eyes beginning to glaze over, and a slightly embarrassed expression coming on their faces

as they try and work out how to gently explain that they've heard that one before....

Sadly, even if I start off by saying "Stop me if you've heard this before," some people are too polite to interrupt!

However when it is a new story, told to someone who is interested, it's fun to tell it. So, for example, I phoned my brother recently and said "Did you know that the house at Inverewe where we spent our teenage years, is now a holiday-let? There are lots of photos on the letting agency website where we can see the sitting room and kitchen, our bedrooms and a vastly improved bathroom. All far smarter than in our day." And he was really interested.

But when I told him about my plans for next year, he stopped me and said "You told me this last time you called!"

So be it – at least he told me.

If someone is enthusing about something new, it's pretty well bound to go down well. But when we hear something we've heard before, yawning is the most likely response.

So when Ezra dusted down the old and neglected copy of the Book of Moses that the crowd had never heard before, and he started reading it out to them, the listeners were so moved that "The people wept when they heard the words of the law."

"Do not be grieved," said Ezra, "be cheerful for the joy of the Lord is your strength." And he told them to go and celebrate.

Why were they moved? What was there to celebrate?

I think it was because "the law", the ten commandments, revealed to them where they had been going wrong, and what needed putting right.

Not knowing the rules is a bit like when I'm driving down a road with speed limits that change from time to time. Sometimes I lose track of the speed limit and it's really unsettling not to know whether it's 40 or 50 or 60. If it's 60 and I'm doing 40, the people behind get very cross. If it's 40 and I'm doing 60, the consequences could be expensive!

It must have come as a great relief to Ezra's listeners to be given rules by which to live, that they could use to guide their lives. The rules, the Law, said they should start by loving and trusting God and all will be well.

But, as the Old Testament proceeds, the problem changes. Instead of people breaking the law because they didn't know it, they begin deliberately breaking the law, turning away from God, knowing what they should do, but simply not doing it.

And the prophets kept telling them this – to no avail. It was an old story that they had heard before.

But many years later, when Jesus stood up in the Synagogue in Nazareth and told the congregation that the Spirit would bring good news to the poor, release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free – this was an amazing new story that they heard for the first time.

Jesus, the Messiah had come, was indeed in their midst.

What a story – and how fast it spread, like wildfire, after Jesus' resurrection – all around the Mediterranean. A new story with wings! Paul enthusing about the gifts of the Spirit and how people's lives were being transformed. The poor found a new hope in living. The oppressed became bold and sought for justice. The Kingdom was coming.

Indeed, so much of the good that has spread across society today – the fights for justice and equality; fights against poverty and homelessness; campaigns against famine and drought – all these have been learnt from the Christian gospel and become normalised.

It's a great story even if an old one now – maybe people stop us and say "We've heard it before." But so long as we live it and demonstrate the power of love, God's Kingdom will continue to spread and His will will be done.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

The Creed

**We believe in God the Father,
God almighty, by whose plan
earth and heaven sprang to being,
all created things began.**

**We believe in Christ the Saviour,
Son of God in human frame,
virgin-born, the child of Mary
upon whom the Spirit came.**

**Christ, who on the cross forsaken,
like a lamb to slaughter led,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
he descended to the dead.**

**We believe in Jesus risen,
heaven's king to rule and reign,
to the Father's side ascended
till as judge he comes again.**

**We believe in God the Spirit;
in one Church, below, above:
saints of God in one communion,
one in holiness and love.**

**So by faith, our sins forgiven,
Christ our Saviour, Lord and friend,
we shall rise with him in glory
to the life that knows no end.**

Prayers of Intercession

(Sit or kneel)

United in the company of all the faithful
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.**

That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful:

We pray to you, O Lord

That your holy angels may lead us in oaths of peace and goodwill:

We pray to you, O Lord

That we may be pardoned and forgiven for our sins and offences:

We pray to you, O Lord

That there may be peace in your church and for the whole world

We pray to you, O Lord

That we may be bound together by your Holy Spirit,
In communion with all your saints,
Entrusting one another and all our life to Christ:

We pray to you, O Lord

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.**

The Collect

Almighty God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles
the wonder of your saving presence:
renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your mighty power;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn – I cannot tell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zltma-BlmM8>

I cannot tell how he whom angels worship
should stoop to love the peoples of the earth,
or why as shepherd he should seek the wanderers
with his mysterious promise of new birth.
But this I know, that he was born of Mary,
when Bethlehem's manger was his only home,
and that he lived at Nazareth and laboured,
and so the saviour, saviour of the world, is come.

I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
as with his peace he graced this place of tears,
nor how his heart upon the cross was broken,
the crown of pain to three and thirty years.
But this I know, he heals the broken-hearted,
and stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,
and lifts the burden from the heavy laden,
for still the saviour, saviour of the world, is here.

I cannot tell how he will win the nations,
how he will claim his earthly heritage,
how satisfy the needs and aspirations
of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see his glory,
and he shall reap the harvest he has sown,
and some glad day his sun shall shine in splendour
when he the saviour, saviour of the world, is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
when, at his bidding, every storm is stilled,
or who can say how great the jubilation
when all our hearts with love for him are filled.
But this I know, the skies will sound his praises,
ten thousand thousand human voices sing,
and earth to heaven, and heaven to earth, will answer:
at last the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is King.

The Blessing

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen

Let us bless the Lord

Thanks be to God.