

Ashburton and Moorland Team

Advent Sunday

27th November 2022



¶ 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 1. The Patriarchs

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors:
to you be praise and glory for ever.
You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith
and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment.
May we be obedient to your call
and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ,
a lamp to our feet and a light to our path;
for you are our light and our salvation.
Blessed be God for ever.

Amen

Hymn – O come, O come Emmanuel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h03SJnUx8mq>

O come, O come, Emmanuel
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free
thine own from Satan's tyranny.
From depths of hell thy people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe the way that leads on high
and close the path to misery
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, thou Lord of might
who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height
in ancient times did'st give the law
in cloud, and majesty and awe.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

Words: from the "Great O
Antiphons"(12th - 13th century)
trans. John Mason Neale (1818 - 1866)

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

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living
and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him 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

Isaiah 2.1-5

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

In days to come

the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

Many peoples shall come and say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;

that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.’
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Romans 13.11-14

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn – Come thou long expected Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEEd0uWnDGs>

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Words: Charles Wesley (1707 - 1788)

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 Matthew
Glory to you, O Lord.

Matthew 24.36-44

Jesus spoke to his disciples: 'But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be

broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.,

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The Sermon

During the drought this summer – do you remember the drought? – we found that when we were out walking Bridey, that the bits of the moor that were normally boggy and impassable became firm and safe. As the ground became drier and drier it was as if the soil shrunk into itself, like the moor was protecting itself, waiting for the rains to fall.

As indeed they did, and are continuing to do! Day after day we seem to be getting yet another inch of rain, not to mention gales and the chill-factor.

So the bogs and mires have returned, the moor is back to it's normal self. It seemed as if the dried up ponds would never re-form and the pond life seemed to be gone forever, are now brimming with new growth. And I guess even the reservoirs are filling again – though it seems there is still a hosepipe ban in Cornwall and North Devon!

In the summer it was trainers or sandals. Now it's definitely wellies.

And the problem is, as we discovered recently, that, rather than stepping easily over a small stream or bog in the summer, now when we want to cross over, it's a matter of jumping from tussock to tussock – carefully finding a way where the peat doesn't suck your foot into a vice-like grip.

It can be a real challenge to get where we want to go – no longer is it nice and dry, rather it's deep and gloopy! And then it starts getting dark, so we need a torch!

Getting to a longed for destination, like Christmas, is often like that. Sometimes it's easy, other times it feels distant and unattainable.

Sometimes it's like walking on a dry moor, when a longed for event just comes along easily. Other times the "looking forward" to something can become bogged down in the difficulties that are

thrown up. It feels like a real struggle, like crossing a wet bog with not enough tussocks.

Some years I find that Advent passes quickly and that wonderful, alluring safe place, Christmas, just arrives gently.

Other years, like this year I expect for most of us, there are so many troubling things going on that the haven of Christmas seems almost unattainable at this distance. I long for it, I long to get there, but I just have to patiently work through all the days of planning and preparation.

I hope that for most people here Christmas is a time you are looking forward to?

I wonder which part of it is most important to you? Turkey with all the trimmings? Giving presents are hoping for a joyful reaction? Time just to sit and relax in front of the fire & TV? Meeting up with family and friends?

I love them all. As a result, for me, Christmas is a powerful symbol of a better life, a life where troubles can be forgotten for a while. And because at the heart of it is the coming of Jesus, it almost feels like a foretaste of heaven.

As an aside, if you know people who are dreading Christmas, who find it a difficult time, do see if you can think of ways of making Christmas better for them. Could you take round a ready cooked Christmas dinner? Invite them out? Spend an afternoon with them?

But Christmas is still four weeks away, and this year, it may feel particularly hard to look forward to it. There are so many extra things to worry about. The cost of petrol when driving to visit someone. The rising cost of food and drink. Decisions about how warm to keep the house. Whether you can buy enough eggs. I'm sure you can name more.

These are some of the boggy bits between the tussocks, brought about by events completely beyond our control. It feels like its each one needs to be weighed up and jumped over before arriving at Christmas Day.

This makes Advent into a journey, rather like in the vision of Isaiah. He imagines people seeing the Lord's house on the highest of the mountains, and they are drawn to climb towards it. Find the paths that lead there, and like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, avoiding the boggy bits, like the Slough of Despond.

Isaiah envisages the people being drawn to the "Light of the Lord". I imagine them with their heads lifted high, deliberately ignoring and avoiding distractions and temptations on the way.

St Paul uses a slightly different analogy – we need to wake from sleep – as if we have been sleep-walking through life, not noticing where we have gone astray in the darkness. For him it's about wearing the Armour of Light.

Do you know that embarrassing feeling that I get when someone points out that I've been quarrelling or jealous of someone and I realise how bad my behaviour was?

It's like a torch being shone on a shameful situation. They are right to point it out – nothing that is done under cover of darkness has a place in God's Kingdom of Light.

Jesus imagines the dazzling purity of God's light showing up the awful behaviour of the people who were swept away in the Flood. He sees evil as a "thief in the night" who can't survive the light of day or the light of a torch.

So we need to cautiously make our way through Advent towards the light of Christmas, stepping carefully as we do our best to prepare the season to be a time of rejoicing and happiness for those we share it with.

Advent's a time to set aside differences, work out priorities on spending and presents, make up broken family relationships. A time to look up rather than down.

In fact it's exactly the same approach we might make when making our way the Kingdom of Heaven. A good Christmas is a foretaste of heaven. Heaven itself will be like Christmas every day!

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.

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 – Hark a herald voice is calling

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEfNOcEy4u4>

Hark! a herald voice is calling:
'Christ is nigh' it seems to say;
'cast away the dreams of darkness,
O ye children of the day!'

Startled at the solemn warning,
let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, her sun, all sloth dispelling
shines upon the morning skies.

Lo! the lamb so long expected,
comes with pardon down from heaven;
let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
one and all to be forgiven.

So when next he comes in glory,
shrouding all the earth in fear,
may he then as our defender
on the clouds of heaven appear.

Honour, glory, virtue merit,
to the Father and the Son,
with the co-eternal Spirit
while unending ages run.

Words: 6th century
(trans. Edward Caswall 1814 - 1878)

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 – Lo, he comes with clouds descending

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-5ACjv23-Q>

Lo, he comes with clouds descending,
once for favoured sinners slain;
thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
God appears on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold him
robed in dreadful majesty;
those who set at naught and sold him,
pierced and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
shall the true Messiah see.

Sing, Amen, let all adore thee,
high on thy eternal throne;
saviour, take the power and glory,
claim the kingdom for thine own:
come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus,
everlasting God come down.

Words: Charles Wesley (1707 - 1788)
John Cennick (1718 - 1755)
and Martin Madan (1726 - 1790)

¶ 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.