



Diocese of Ely
THREE RIVERS GROUP
Chippenham, Fordham, Isleham, Kennett, Snailwell

Sunday 15th November 2020 – Two before Advent

Opening Music: Prelude on "Be thou my vision", by Noel Rawsthorne

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9dPqOeYNmU>

Hymn: O God Our Help

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

O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home.

Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received her frame,
from everlasting thou art God,
to endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight
are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while life shall last,
and our eternal home.

Confession

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

May your loving mercy come to me, O Lord,
and your salvation according to your word:
Lord, have mercy.

Your word is a lantern to my feet and a light to my path:
Christ, have mercy.

O let your mercy come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight:
Lord, have mercy.

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**

Collect

Heavenly Lord, you long for the world's salvation: stir us from apathy,
restrain us from excess and revive in us new hope that all creation will one day be
healed in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Readings

A reading from the prophecy of 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.

Psalm 90.1-8

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling-place in all generations.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

3 You turn us back to dust, and say, 'Turn back, you mortals.'

4 For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.

5 You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning;

6 in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

7 For we are consumed by your anger; by your wrath we are overwhelmed.

8 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

A reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (5.1-11)

Now 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.

A reading from St. Matthew's Gospel (25.14-30)

'For it 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.”

Sermon *(with thanks to Carol Taylor)*

May I speak in the name of the living God; who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Well there is a powerful selection of readings for us in the middle of the second wave of a pandemic. All it seems is death and destruction with ‘The Day of Reckoning’ except for the “in- crowd’ in Thessalonica. I hope that you have not already switched off because I am about to explode – it is more than ‘explore’, this wonderful parable. I am indebted to a great group of children and two adult tutors when I first began to learn about presenting Godly Play as a Sunday activity for children. The children were, without exception, cheeky, accepted nothing as a given and questioned everything. They were in the age group of between 8 and 14 years as I remember. A nightmare for conventional Sunday School at that time, but a gift for this other type of learning. What I should say is that they were there under sufferance. They had no choice about attending but they were all well versed in scripture.

Parables, as I am always saying, have many layers and they speak a lot about the Kingdom of Heaven and since that is something way out of our comprehension our Lord used stories about things we know about in order to – well, turn everything upside down. His Kingdom is very different.

Seat belts on, I will share what I learnt. Having told the story of the Parable of the Talents, the questions in summary for us to wander about were; who are these people really in this story and where is God.

Is the man going on the journey and dividing out his property to his slaves and then after a long absence returning to pass judgement on those who had received his largesse, God? This powerful master is often seen as such and we as his slaves who on receiving such riches according to our abilities – and even one talent was a huge sum of money – had better take care that we use them or we will suffer the terrible fate of the one who buried his share and did nothing. I can still hear the stinging conclusion of the first child to respond, “If that’s what God is like I’m not going to heaven”, Hell another pointed out was not looking a much better option. So, with questioning they started to unpick the layers.

We are not slaves of God. When God began a relationship with his chosen people his defining act was to free them from slavery to the Egyptians. Yes, we are all in receipt of his bounty which is even more generous and overflowing than the talents offered. The master in the parable though, rewards according to his judgement on their abilities. This cannot be said of Jesus. The examples are everywhere in the Bible. His disciples, a sorry and unbelieving group after his death and their abandonment of him were those he chose to carry his Gospel to the far corners of the world. He blesses the outcast, the least in society over and over again. (It is almost that they are chosen because being empty they have room to receive. I am reminded here, of that Beatitude; “Blessed are the poor in spirit for they shall see God”). This master “went away”! We are constantly aware that in our own strength we can do nothing but in Him all things are possible. Matthew’s Gospel is wrapped around the idea that God will not go away and leave us. From one of the names given at his birth, for the Saviour of the world, Matthew specifically refers back to the first Isaiah’s prophecy, “They shall name him Emmanuel’– God with us; to his final words; he records Jesus as saying: “Remember I am with you always to the end of time”.

It is very much in our world that we trade with what is not given but “entrusted” to us and the rich get richer and the poor have the little they have taken away and given to those who have most. It is interesting that the man going on the journey entrusts or (in the latest Greek translation ‘hands over’) his possessions to his slaves but he does not actually charge them with doing anything with them. Did you notice that? The man of property who is called ‘harsh’ by his slave, describes him further as reaping and gathering where there is no relationship of his having even sown or scattered, the third slave admits to only hiding the portion of goods given to him and produces what has been given to him, no more, no less.

He is accused of being idle and wicked, then told what he should have done and his punishment is dire. Children carry a fine sense of what is fair and they were very outspoken about this. How fair was it for a slave whose whole life revolved around total obedience, who probably owned nothing, suddenly having to give increase on this vast amount of material worth. He has to be in modern parlance a “good wheeler dealer” and the risk he was said to fear was that of being unable to risk what he had been given. He does keep it safe though.

There seems to be little of God in this absentee landowner. Where is the God of Israel who brings his people into that land after their wandering in the desert where they are guided and fed and led into a land to drink from wells they did not dig and have the benefit of harvests they did not sow. Jesus fed the five thousand hungry who came to listen to him and the early church sold what they had and shared – all be it with some prompting from Paul with widows and orphans who had nothing. So where is God?

Here is where you need to hold on to your hats for the children found Christ in the third slave who was condemned to the darkness. Jesus spoke of losing nothing that he had been given, just like the slave. The other two doubled their share in trading so in getting more did others lose out? Did this slave refuse to play the game and feared losing that part of him which his master judged he had less of than his fellows and so received less? Jesus took on a slave’s roll when he washed his disciples’ feet because this job fell to the least of the servants. He never used his power in a material way. He told his disciples that it should not be like that with you when referring to being important in the world, and that they were to instead take on a servant role like him. These children saw Jesus in the third slave’s suffering because Jesus descended into hell in taking on all our wrong doings. He was condemned as worthless because he took on the death, that the Jews considered those who suffered it to be cursed. The worthless slave took on the Judgement of us all. His Father was the Judge and in the outer darkness spoken of, Jesus became the light.

There you have it from the notes I took. I said in the beginning that the group of children were somewhat coerced to taking part in this session for our training. They did enjoy themselves as they got into their wanderings and arguing their corner. We had to choose an activity to reflect this story at the end with the children, a free choice. One of the tutors headed for the sand tray and made a sandcastle which she took great pleasure in knocking down at the end. Just saying!

Amen

Hymn: Awake my soul https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMF5e_8dd_w

Awake, my soul, and with the sun
thy daily stage of duty run;
shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise
to pay thy morning sacrifice.

Wake, and lift up thyself, my heart,
and with the angels bear thy part,
who all night long unwearied sing
high praise to the eternal King.

Lord, I my vows to Thee renew;
disperse my sins as morning dew.
guard my first springs of thought and will,
and with Thyself my spirit fill.

Direct, control, suggest, this day,
all I design, or do, or say,
that all my powers, with all their might,
in Thy sole glory may unite.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise Him, all creatures here below;
praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

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.

Intercessions *(with thanks to Mark Fletcher)*

Let us bring the things on our hearts to our loving Heavenly Father as we pray together but apart.

Father God, your word tells us time and again 'Do not be afraid'. We realise that we here are very fortunate compared with people in most other places. But we come to you with many worries. We give thanks for the hopeful news of progress with a vaccine. We pray for those in this country and around the world who are ill with Covid or fearful they might be ill, and for those who are sick in other ways and worried that their treatment may be disrupted. We pray for all key workers who have to be in public places and situations that most of us can avoid. We pray for people worried about looking after their family or who cannot visit or see or touch their loved ones. We give thanks for all the medical staff and carers asking that you keep them and their families safe from infection and give them resilience to keep going even in the face of 'it'll get worse before it gets better'. We pray especially for medical staff working under appalling conditions in countries like India without sufficient protection or facilities. **Lord in your mercy...**

We continue to pray for all our children and young people and for those who teach or care for them at school thinking especially of local schools and pre-schools. We ask for protection from coronavirus for children, staff, and families. We pray for teachers and administrators that they will manage the extra stress and complications of that coping with different organization demands. We pray for students experiencing lockdown in colleges and uncertainty about how they will need to quarantine. We also remember all the millions of children around the

world who have little or no schooling and whose chances of an education are made worse by the pandemic. **Lord in your mercy...**

Creator God. You have blessed your world with abundant life and yet it is so damaged by human greed and selfishness and ignorance. We pray that world leaders will co-operate urgently to find solutions which protect precious places and combat global warming and pollution. **Lord in your mercy...**

A week or so ago the murders in Nice, and a refugee family drowning in the Channel were the news headlines. A month ago it was the devastating explosion that destroyed so much of Beirut. We pray Lord that because so much is happening we do not quickly or lightly move our concerns from one crisis to another. We pray for all affected by war, wars past and present. Empower the peacemakers so that aid can reach where it's needed. As thoughts already begin to turn to Advent and on to Christmas help us to use this strange and disturbing period to reflect on your message to us through the humble birth of Jesus and the refugee flight of the Holy Family. Teach us how to be generous enough and wise enough to find ways to rescue the generations whose lives are blighted by war or poverty. **Lord in your mercy...**

We pray for all who carry heavy leadership responsibilities on our behalf. We thank you again for the faithful witness of our Queen. We pray for our government and politicians trying hard to find policies that work and which bring people together. We pray for all managers trying to do their best for employees, and for the many people fearful of the effects of redundancy, unemployment and poverty. We continue to pray for America and the American people, for wise leadership to heal bitter divisions. We pray that the country does become truly great again by holding fast to the Bible principles of equality, justice and opportunity expressed by the Founding Fathers. **Lord in your mercy...**

We lift to you those known to us who are in very hard places with health. We pray for those who we know who feel separated from love of God or family. We pray for those who are lonely. We pray for those who mourn. We thank you for your Church worldwide, for our family fellowship here. We pray with gratitude for David and Sue and Anna and all who serve the parish in your name. Uphold them as they work together in love and trust to develop on-line worship and fellowship and find ways to maintain a socially-distanced pastoral ministry.

Stir us all up to become as salt and light in this lovely but rather nervous place and time to which you have brought us...

Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Reflection

At the point in our service where we would usually be remembering the Last Supper together, we pause to pray for those with whom we would usually be receiving bread and wine in church. Quietly think of each of those in church, those you know well and know what to pray for them and those you know less well and are unsure of how to pray. Perhaps at this point you would like to eat some bread and drink something. We are reminded that although separated at this time we are still members together of the body of Christ.

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**

Final Hymn: From Heaven You Came

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCAdWs-ZyEk>

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. *(Refrain)*

Come, see his hands and his feet,
The scars that speak of sacrifice,
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered. *(Refrain)*

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. *(Refrain)*

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

Closing Organ Voluntary: Prelude on “Londonderry Air” (arr. Noel Rawsthorne)
David Poulter, Organ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07g6SqM2vDI>

Notices

Bible Book Club

Next instalment will be on Wednesday 2nd December 7.30-9pm. We will be looking at the letter to the Hebrews. Good if you can have read the book in advance.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82818509505> Meeting ID: 828 1850 9505

Beatitudes Course

The Pilgrim Course on the Beatitudes will be held on Zoom at the following times:

- Tuesdays, 7.30-9pm (starting 3rd November)
- Fridays, 10.30am-12 noon (starting 6th November)

There is still space and time to join if you're interested. Please contact Rev'd Anna for details if so.

Sunday Evening Service – 8pm

A quiet service to round off Sunday (open to everyone but may be particularly valuable if you're not able to come to church in the morning). The Zoom session will open from 7.30 to allow people to chat beforehand, and worship will start at 8pm. We will explore different forms of Night Prayer through the month (1st Sunday: traditional Compline; 2nd: Celtic Night Prayer; 3rd: Compline in contemporary language; 4th: Contemplative Night Prayer), beginning on 25th October with a contemplative service. Please consider who you might invite to join us for this new venture. Meeting ID: 810 1509 1842.

Intercessions: Funerals (Attendance by invitation only)

Hazel Thompson (Isleham) Friday 6th November

Priscilla Gaskin (Chippenham)

Funeral Newmarket Cemetery, Monday 16th November 11.30am

Loddy Buck

Fordham Churchyard, Wednesday 18th November 2.30pm

Three Rivers Ministry Team

Rector: The Rev'd David Cleugh 723010 davidrcleugh@gmail.com

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Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_xNAa4zgNZrE8lmizNC_3g