



## Fourth Sunday of Advent 19<sup>th</sup> December

Father God help us to come to you this morning with open and thankful hearts. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes with knowing you. Be with us as we walk in your light, rejoice in your love and reflect your glory.

**Amen**

### Hymn 438: Make way, make way

#### Welcome

The Lord be with you,  
and also with you

#### 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**

#### Prayer of Confession

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.**

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.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.**

**For the sake of your son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name.  
Amen**

Lord have mercy  
**Lord have mercy**  
Christ have mercy  
**Christ have mercy**  
Lord have mercy  
**Lord have mercy**

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

### **Collect for today:**

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.

### **Psalm 30: 1 – 5. 11 – end**

- 1 I will exalt you, O Lord, because you have raised me up ♦  
and have not let my foes triumph over me.
- 2 O Lord my God, I cried out to you ♦  
and you have healed me.
- 3 You brought me up, O Lord, from the dead; ♦  
you restored me to life from among those that go down to the Pit.
- 4 Sing to the Lord, you servants of his; ♦  
give thanks to his holy name.
- 5 For his wrath endures but the twinkling of an eye,  
his favour for a lifetime. ♦  
Heaviness may endure for a night,  
but joy comes in the morning.
- 11 You have turned my mourning into dancing; ♦  
you have put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness;
- 12 Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing; ♦  
O Lord my God, I will give you thanks for ever.

### **Hymn 634: The Angel Gabriel**

### **Gospel Reading: Luke 7: 24 - 30**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

## Glory to you, O Lord

When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who put on fine clothing and live in luxury are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."

I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.' (And all the people who heard this, including the tax-collectors, acknowledged the justice of God, because they had been baptized with John's baptism. But by refusing to be baptized by him, the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves.)

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## Praise to you, O Christ

### Sermon: Kathryn Psalm 30 From Thursday 16 December 2021

Earlier this week, on Tuesday, in the church calendar we remembered St John of the Cross. John was a 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish mystic. He was born into a very poor family and initially became an apprentice craftsman. However, a rich patron paid for him to attend a Jesuit college where he received a classical education, before entering the local Carmelite monastery. But it was his meeting with another Spaniard, Theresa of Avilla that changed his life. Like Theresa he became a reformer of monasteries. But it is for his mystical poems and commentaries that we mostly remember him, including *The Dark Night*. In this work from which the phrase The Dark night of the Soul comes, John describes the journey of the soul from its bodily home to its spiritual union with God. This journey takes place in the so called dark, the dark representing the hardships and difficulties that are encountered when separating oneself from the world. These difficulties include a kind of sensory deprivation, removing all the distraction of the world, spiritual darkness and purification which are all necessary before reaching the light of a mystical union with God. For John of the Cross spiritual maturity is not without some painful experiences along the way. The dark night of the soul does not refer to the difficulties of life in general although the phrase has often been taken to refer to such trials.

Psalm 30 also describes some of the struggles of the life of faith although in the context of the temple and worship in the temple. Although it is attributed to David, it is also designated in the superscription before the psalm in our Bibles as a song for the dedication of the temple. Therefore, since the temple was dedicated by King Solomon, David's son it seems likely that the psalm was

used for the dedication of the second temple in 515BC described in Ezra or even its rededication in the Maccabean era in the second century BC.

The psalmist starts with a shout of praise because God has drawn him up, healed him, and restored his life. The psalmist describes his healing as being brought up from the pit suggesting that he has been brought up from the spiritual deeps of Sheol and the pit. Sheol is the Hebrew underworld, so Sheol and the Pit are images of spiritually lifelessness, dark places, perhaps not dissimilar to the dark night of the soul, those dark difficult places on our spiritual journeys.

The psalmist pauses to praise God but goes on to describe how even though he had attributed his prosperity in life to God's favour, he had found himself separated from God. 'You hid your face' the psalmist says. Once again describing those difficult moments when God feels far away, we feel abandoned. When praising God is difficult and instead, we cry out in pain. But to cry out is to express a faith that God does hear us in the difficult times. The psalmist cried out, God listened and he has been healed. Mourning is turned once more to dancing, sackcloth is removed, and the psalmist is clothed once more with joy, but we know that things have not been easy for him. Perhaps that resonates with us, things are not easy as believers, we too experience times of doubts and frustrations as well as times of joy.

In this psalm the past experiences of the psalmist and the present are woven together and we are drawn in. But God's favour is not limited to the past or the present, it is eternal. And it is in the Eucharist that we are drawn into something so much bigger than ourselves, something that encompasses the past the present and the future. A place where we are able to meet with God, a place where we can find healing. A place where, thankfully we can come time and time again as we experience the ups and downs of our spiritual lives.

I think that we don't often acknowledge the fact that there are times when God feels very far away and it is hard to experience God's love, because faith almost inevitably involves times of weeping and mourning, sometimes associated by what is happening around us, but we know joy does come in the morning because we are an Easter people. We know that we can't have the joy of Easter without the pain of Good Friday and the desolation of Holy Saturday.

[\*\*\*XXX Exaltabo te, Domine\*\*\*](#) by Malcolm Guite

He gives us too, a voice to sing his praises,

So much the more because we were brought low

That we might know we have a God who raises

Up the lowly. Our old riches made us slow

To love you, slow to turn to you in praise

But sudden loss and crisis made us know

Our true dependence on your love. Our days

Of false security are gone, we fell

Into a pit of our own making. Raise

Us up again, each out of our own hell

And give us oil for ashes, joy for mourning

Restore us in your love and we will tell

Of how through our long night we heard your warning

And heeded you, and found your love again

How night withdrew and joy came in the morning.

## **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:**

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

### **Hymn 195: The Servant King**

#### **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours.  
Now and for ever.  
Amen.

### **Hymn 508: O Little Town of Bethlehem**

#### **Remembering the Lord's Supper:**

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal - with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends - we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

### **Hymn 631: Tell out my soul**

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
**In the name of Christ. Amen**