



Second Sunday of Christmas: 3rd January

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 724: We three kings

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

Almighty God, in the birth of your Son you have poured on us the new light of your incarnate Word, and shown us the fullness of your love: help us to walk in his light and dwell in his love that we may know the fullness of his joy; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 31:7- 14

For thus says the Lord: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'Save, O Lord, your people, the remnant of Israel.' See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labour, together; a great company, they shall return here. With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock.' For the Lord has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the Lord.

Hymn 321: Infant holy, infant lowly

Gospel Reading: John 1:1-9, 10-18

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory to you, O Lord

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Rev'd Petra Shakeshaft

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,
it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness,
it was the epoch of belief, it was the age of incredulity,
it was the age of light, it was the age of darkness,
it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.

Time will tell how we will reflect on 2020;
what we will make of it, what history will make of it
and whether we are heading towards the spring of hope through a winter of despair.
Charles Dicken's contradictions, held simultaneously in tension –
continue to ring true, because we're not out of the woods yet.

We have seen the best of people and the worst of people;
great wisdom, self-sacrifice, kindness and heroic acts on the one hand
and crass stupidity, foolishness, selfishness, on the other.
The whole spectrum of human nature played out on our screens,
on radio, in newspapers, before our eyes.
And we're all experiencing that tension at some level.

For some, the pandemic has been not too much worse
than the inconvenience of lockdown and a quieter social life –
in fact some aspects of it, particularly early on were welcomed as a blessed relief,
for others it has been exhausting, life-changing, tragic.
Who could have listened to Michael Rosen on Wednesday morning and not been moved to tears?

For us, as a family it came as a period of respite and healing after a traumatic few months.

It brought us together; removed external demands on our time and attention.
 Since September though, I have seen something of the other side of things at Addenbrooke's.
 Over and over again I am both appalled and moved at the scale of human brokenness,
 immeasurably intensified by Covid.

We think of hospitals as primarily concerned with physical healing
 of physical sickness and brokenness – and so they are,
 but many of the stories I have heard over the months
 are not concerned with the physical presentation of illness or accident,
 but of grief, often long-held griefs over losses, relationship breakdown, abuse, loneliness
 coupled with the loss of sense of identity that life-changing illness and hospitalisation brings;
 all of this exacerbated by the ban on visitors – loss of, even brief moments of companionship.

For those used to social media, this can be mitigated to some extent,
 but for others, especially the elderly, the isolation is desperate –
 And let's not forget care homes, hospices and those working from home,
 and in houses up and down the country
 where people struggle with small children or elderly or vulnerable relatives,
 or those who are alone; anxious about human contact and yet desperate to be together;
 ... held in tension and tiredness.

I think we are all tired of not being together.

Isolation is the deprivation of so much that it means to be human.
 We are creatures made for companionship and society.

*God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone
 I will make him a helper as his partner.'*

We are social creatures.

We are interdependent.

We need to tell our stories and hear the stories of others
 and share and make stories together.

Our stories make us who we are.

Telling our story reminds us *who* we are.

Patients in hospital need to tell their story – they need to remind themselves of who they were,
 who they are and who they are to become,
 now this life-changing or life-limiting thing has happened.

Reflecting on the past year; looking back as we look forward, Janus-like,
 both collectively and as individuals,
 is how we hold on to who we are and imagine our future, bearing the burden of truth.
 Our story is a shared story, because it begins with the story of how The Truth came from above.

Our faith is predicated on the quest for that truth;
 the sharp sword that is, at times, ugly, challenging, burdensome,
 but it's a burden that makes us fully human.

Irenaeus says,

The glory of God is a human being fully alive.

The truth makes us live.

The truth is, Jesus came into the world to shed light on the darkness,
to expose the brokenness, the dysfunction, the lostness,
to turn our faces towards the light,
towards the God who loves us so much, he chose,
he chooses to come and inhabit that brokenness and to transform it - to transform us.

John's Gospel was almost certainly written for a worshipping community,
which had already begun to discern what it means to follow Christ,
that it means *coming* together, *being* together – I remember Peter levins saying,
You can't be a Christian in isolation;
We work *together* facing the challenge He offers; the calling, if you like to walk with Him,
in His light, ministering to those in need or in pain.
Sometimes we must take risks in what we do and say
But, in this worst of times, we must draw on those golden threads of hope
and offer them to those whose hands are reaching out, whose hearts are longing -
to make the worst of times the best of times we can.

Today we should have been celebrating the Epiphany,
but don't worry, we'll catch up with it next week.
I want to share a few lines of TS Eliot's poem, The Journey of the Magi;
where the narrator reflects on that inner journey he has also taken towards the manger;
the discovery that this birth has caused a birthing inside him and things can never be the same.

*were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.*

So as we look forward to this New Year,
let's reflect on what has passed and what we are being called to do;
what we might be being called to leave behind – to die to;
How we might make the worst the best,
speak God's wisdom into the foolishness,
belief to the incredulous,
how we might shine God's light into the darkness,
bringing hope into the despair.

And in our own brokenness, remember, it is the broken hands of a broken human being
that offers us the bread of life, broken for us,
Hands that hold us, heal us, draw us *together* towards him

and send us out to do for others what he has done for us.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not, shall not, cannot overcome it.

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.

Prayers

Let us pray: This day is a new day that has never been before. This year is a New Year, an opening door. Enter with us, O Lord, upon this New Year in our church's life.

Lord, we pray for our ministers all, past, present and future, and our worship, for inspiration, perseverance, and wisdom.

Lord, we pray for that opening door of opportunity as we welcome new people, new ideas, new projects and vision.

Lord Christ, we remember too one another as we work and pray together.

Lord, bless our humble reaching out, especially to families and children; teach us to love and value all those who come in, of all ages.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Lord of all, for our world we pray: the frail, blue planet that we still have an opening door to save.

Lord, we remember countries where huge changes are afoot, with all their welcome and unwelcome aspects: the UK as we face consequences of leaving the EU; the United States as Joe Biden prepares for office; Europe with its subtleties and balances of power; countries where vulnerable fugitives are increasing.

Lord Christ, we ask You to protect and help those who give aid in less developed countries, battling with poor infrastructure, high infection, refugee crises.

Lord, enlighten us as we consider the world You love, and our own part in it.

Lord, hold back the Covid pandemic and help those administering the vaccination programmes.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Lord, be our vision as the door opens into New Year in our community:

Lord, in our restrictions, bring empowering and openness.

Lord Christ, in our deliberations bring compassion and clarity.

Forgive us our own blindness and let us see You in those around us.

Lord, shape our thinking, that we may light candles in the darkness and find ways of turning vision and prayer into action.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Lord of all life, help us to care for those for whom life, despite new hopes, is *hard*.

Lord Christ, we remember especially those who are sick, or just sick-at-heart, or sick from fear.

Lord, Who opens doors that cannot be shut, help all with great needs to see great light flooding in towards them.

And, Lord, we bring You our own personal concerns and weaknesses, that we too may grasp this time You have given us to live in Your loving presence.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Lord of life and death, hear us as we remember all who have died recently, including Janet Powell and all hopes and plans that have died with the disruption of 2020, all disappointments, and all despair.

Lord, open the door to us wider, that we may go in and see the Christ Child; then tune our hearts to the music of heaven.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Finally we take a few minutes to remember God's loving covenant with us, His faithfulness through the years, how He has led us and made the star stop to indicate our direction. Let us renew our side of the calling:

Christ has many tasks for us, some easy, others difficult, some to our liking, fitting our inclinations, some just the opposite. It is He Who calls and strengthens.

Lord, we are no longer our own, but Yours; use us as You choose. Let us be busy or laid aside for You, raised up for You or brought down low for You. Let us have all things, let us have nothing.

With our whole heart enable us to bring our gifts, like the Wise Men, freely giving all things to Your ordering and approval. So now, God of Glory, God of the opening door, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You are ours and we are Yours.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Peace

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family

church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

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 49: As with gladness men of old

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 745: While shepherds watched

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 641: The First Nowell

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