



Advent Sunday 28th November

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 480: O come, O come, Emmanuel

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:

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.

Old Testament Reading: Daniel 6: 12 to end

Then they approached the king and said concerning the interdict, 'O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human, within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions?' The king answered, 'The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.' Then they responded to the king, 'Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day.'

When the king heard the charge, he was very much distressed. He was determined to save Daniel, and until the sun went down he made every effort to rescue him. Then the conspirators came to the king and said to him, 'Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.'

Then the king gave the command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, 'May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!' A stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no food was brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

Then, at break of day, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. When he came near the den where Daniel was, he cried out anxiously to Daniel, 'O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?' Daniel then said to the king, 'O king, live for ever! My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong.' Then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. The king gave a command, and those who had accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. Before they reached the bottom of the den the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

Then King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations of every language throughout the whole world: 'May you have abundant prosperity! ²⁶I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel:

For he is the living God,
enduring for ever.

His kingdom shall never be destroyed,
and his dominion has no end.

He delivers and rescues,
he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth;
for he has saved Daniel
from the power of the lions.'

So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Hymn 405: Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Gospel Reading: *Luke 21: 20 - 28*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

Glory to you, O Lord

'When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it; for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfilment of all that is written. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people; they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

'There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Rev John Pinder from Thursday 25th November

There has been a lot of talk recently about the failings of politicians and others in the public eye, but one person I think you will agree is the exception is our queen, who throughout her long reign has always acted with integrity and honour. We have a queen who is a symbol of authority, who has dedicated herself to serving her people – all her people, but political power rests with the high court of parliament, democratically elected. By contrast, in 1925, faced with growing brutality of Mussolini's Fascism, and wanting to emphasise Christ's non-violent kingship and rule, Pope Pius XI designated the last Sunday in October as the Feast of Christ the King. Since 1970 it has been kept on the last Sunday of the Church's year.

As the Kingdom season draws to an end we hear of the confrontation between Darius and Daniel. The Book of Daniel has much to say about kings. He lived in the time of the exile, all powerful kings ruled – Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, Cyrus. Powerful as they are, they are brought low by the all powerful God of the Jews who protects his own, even when they are thrown into a burning fiery furnace or the lions' den. In my church in Hampshire, we had some fine Victorian glass from the Kempe studios and in one of them was a rather benign looking lion. The book of Daniel is a bloodthirsty book. The safety of Daniel is contrasted to the fate of those who opposed him. The final version of Daniel was produced during the time of persecution of the Jewish people when the very fabric of the Jewish faith was under threat. It's a mixture of historical propaganda and apocalyptic, with the visions of Daniel describing the final judgement. The collect for this week, following the feast of Christ the King, describes one who is the very antithesis of the Babylonian kings.

The story of Daniel somehow seems very contemporary. We live in a world which is full of corrupt, authoritarian regimes. Like Daniel, there are many who suffer from religious persecution, in many countries people can be thrown into prison for their sexual orientation. The model of kingship shown by Jesus is very different from the self serving despots around the world who steal the wealth of the people they are supposed to serve and imprison anyone who dares to speak out against them.

By contrast the well known passage from Philippians:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus

Who though he was in the form of God

Did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited

But emptied himself;

Taking the form of a slave

Being born in human likeness

and being found in human form

he humbled himself and became obedient to the point death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God also highly exalted him

and gave him the name that is above every name.

The gospel refers to the coming of Jesus to judge the world and so looks forward to the season of Advent. Indeed part of today's gospel will be repeated next Sunday, which is why I don't want to steal Kathryn's thunder by talking too much about the gospel reading today. But it does relate to the Daniel story. He is an exile and Jerusalem has been destroyed and the temple plundered.

Jesus is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army in AD 70. And just as Daniel

looks forward towards God's judgement, Jesus talks about the second coming – 'The son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But the reading ends on an optimistic note, 'stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.' This reminds us that as St Paul says, 'our citizenship is in heaven'. Ultimately that is the only thing that matters. Amen

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

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 66: Be still and know that I am God

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.**

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 168: Forth in thy name O Lord, I go

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