



Second Sunday of Advent 5th 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 527: On Jordan's bank

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, purify our hearts and minds, that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as judge and saviour we may be ready to receive him, who is our Lord and our God.

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 26: 1 - 6

On that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; he sets up victory like walls and bulwarks.

² Open the gates, so that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.

³ Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace— in peace because they trust in you.

⁴ Trust in the LORD for ever, for in the LORD GOD you have an everlasting rock.

⁵ For he has brought low the inhabitants of the height the lofty city he lays low.
He lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust.

⁶ The foot tramples it, the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy.

Hymn 359: Jesus shall reign

Gospel Reading: Matthew 7: 21, 24 - 27

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

Glory to you, O Lord

21 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord", will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

24 'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon Kathryn from Thursday 2nd December

Over the last week we have seen on the news how Storm Arwen has caused a huge amount of damage. It is now six days since the storm hit, and tens of thousands of households are still waiting for their electricity to be connected. Snow, high winds and rain have caused havoc to large areas of north-east England and Scotland. As many of you know, I was travelling back down from Holy Island as the storm approached and we are very thankful that we left the Island when we did. Reports from those still there tell us that many houses have damaged roofs, trees have been brought down and a local coffee shop which had erected shelters, tables and chairs outside in response to the pandemic has been wrecked.

Getting off Holy Island as many of you know is not without its own difficulties since the only access to the Island is via a causeway which floods as the tide rises. But the tide doesn't come in uniformly as you might expect. Towards the mainland there is a river which quickly floods its banks as the tide comes in, causing this part of the road to flood first. But the unwary traveller who ignores the advice and leaves it a bit too late to make the journey back across the causeway, will find this part of the road already flooded and if they then decide to turn back will often find that the road they have travelled on behind them is already flooded. They are surrounded by water as the tide comes in and each year there are a number of people who need to be rescued by the emergency services having been caught out by the rapidly rising water.

In today's gospel reading, a parable that is probably very familiar to most of us from Sunday school days, the builders of houses are caught out by rapidly rising water. It is a parable that is in both Luke and Matthew's gospels. In Matthew, today's gospel, the two houses are buffeted by Storm Arwen like wind, rain and floods, whereas in Luke the houses are affected by rapidly rising flood water. In Luke's version of the story, the issue is around whether the foundations of the house are well built whereas in Matthew it is, in the words of a well-known television program 'Location, location, location' that is important; whether the house is built on rock or sand.

Matthew's version of the parable certainly fits with the geography of the Judean countryside – in this largely desert terrain, sandy ground bakes hard in the hot summer sun and looks very similar to rock. It is only when the rain comes that the sandy ground is easily washed away. The canny or wise person knows, and remembers, what really was rock or solid ground and what was nothing more than baked earth. We are familiar with the builders being described as wise or foolish but it is only in Matthew's gospel that these terms are used. However, in both gospels this parable is placed after Jesus' sermon on the mount, therefore whichever gospel we read it in, it should cause us to ask ourselves about our response to Jesus' teaching.

Do we just listen to Jesus' words, or do we act on them? And of course, the reason we should act on them, is that when we live by them, they will provide a firm foundation for our lives, giving us strength and stability when the storms of life come our way which sadly, is all too often. Many of us have faced different storms of life in the last two years and it seems that we are going to be faced with many uncertainties in the months to come. I wonder, has Jesus' teachings given us strength and security over the last two year?

And if a world pandemic has not led us to be more self-reflective then the season of Advent should prompt us to take a good look at ourselves. Advent is a time for us all to reassess our lives if we can but pause amongst all the business, the preparations, and the worries about whether covid restrictions will change. We all need to take time to prepare our hearts to receive the Christ child once more at Christmas, and we need to prepare for Christ's coming at the end times, whenever that might be and whatever that might look like. And as we do so, we would do well to examine our hearts and our actions. As we look ahead, we also need to look around us to see where God is at work in our community, we need to listen to Jesus' words and we need to look to see where we might be called. We need to ask ourselves whether we really listen and act on Jesus' words. Do we respond to those nudges and prompts of the Holy Spirit, to pick up the phone and talk to someone, to write a card or to perform a small act of kindness? Often nothing big or flashy or that draws attention to ourselves. After all, as Christians we are called to be wise, and to hear and obey Jesus' words. It would be foolish and self-destructive, like building a house on the sand, to hear them and not act on them.

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.

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 161: Father hear the prayer we offer

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.

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