

Sunday, 24th December 2023

4th Sunday of Advent

Reading 1: Romans 16: 25-end

Gospel: Luke 1: 26-38

Opening Prayer:

Lord, direct our thoughts,
and teach us to pray.
Lift up our hearts to worship you
in spirit and in truth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Advent Prayer:

God our Father,
the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary
that she was to be the mother of your Son.
Though Mary was afraid,
she responded to your call with joy.
Help us, whom you call to serve you,
to share like her in your great work
of bringing to our world your love and healing.
We ask this through Jesus Christ,
the light who is coming into the world.

Amen.

**Lord Jesus, light of the world,
blessed is Gabriel, who brought good news;
blessed is Mary, your mother and ours.
Bless your Church preparing for Christmas;
and bless us your children, who long for your coming.
Amen.**

Psalm: 89: 1-8

- ¹ I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, for ever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.
- ² I declare that your steadfast love is established for ever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
- ³ You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to my servant David:
- ⁴ "I will establish your descendants for ever,
and build your throne for all generations.'" *Selah*
- ⁵ Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones.
- ⁶ For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD?
Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD,

⁷ a God feared in the council of the holy ones,
great and awesome^[b] above all that are around him?

⁸ O LORD God of hosts,
who is as mighty as you, O LORD?
Your faithfulness surrounds you.

Song: Holy Holy Holy, the Lord God Almighty
(click link) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgHrNNM23p8>

Invitation to Confession

When the Lord comes,
he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness,
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.
Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

Kyrie Confession:

God, through Jesus Christ,
will judge the secret thoughts of all:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,'
will enter the kingdom of heaven:
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Let anyone who has an ear
listen to what the Spirit is saying
to the churches:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Absolution:

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.

Reading 1: Romans 16: 25 – end

The Final Doxology

²⁵ Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever! Amen.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Gospel Reading: Luke 1: 26-38

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' ³⁵ The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.' ³⁸ Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Talk: Revd Canon Peter Begley <https://youtu.be/T7wY2QHxNWA>
(click link)

Song: Mary did you Know?
(click link) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BP4RiQvkngA>

Affirmation of Faith:

We declare our faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God,
but made himself nothing.
Taking the form of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.
He humbled himself
and was obedient to death,
even the death of the cross.
Therefore God has raised him on high,
and given him the name above every name:
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession:

These prayers are based on the Carol "Do You Hear What I Hear?"

Father God, we thank you for music, music which touches our hearts.
At this busy Christmas time, help us to stop and listen,

help us to hear the angels singing Glory to the newborn King
who is coming into the world.

As in the Carol the little lamb said to the shepherd boy,
“Do you hear what I hear?”

The lamb heard a heavenly song with a voice as big as the sea.

Let us not forget in all the busyness of this Christmas time to
worship the lamb of God, Jesus, with loud and joyful voices.

Please, Father God, give us ears to hear and remind us
constantly to make time to stop and listen.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Father God, help us to look up and in our mind’s eye see the star in the sky,
the bright star shining onto the world into which your Son Jesus was born;
he was born into a difficult world, a world needing the light of Jesus.

And we know, Father, that we continue to need Jesus to light the way for us
into the world today with all the conflicts and often very difficult world happenings.

In the carol, as the night wind said to the little lamb “Do you see what I see?”

The night wind saw a star dancing in the night, a very bright beautiful star
hovering over where the Christ child lay.

Help us, Father, as we struggle to make sense of the world at times;

help us to see the world through your eyes, to see you in the stars,

to see you in each other and like the bright star,

help us to shine brightly in this world for your praise and glory.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Father, as in the carol, the shepherd boy said to the mighty king,

“Do you know what I know?”

Father all of us who know You so desire to want to know You more,
to continuously learn and help others and also to learn of You and
know You in a deeper way.

Today, we bring our gifts anew to You, just as the kings took
gifts to the baby Jesus;

we offer the spiritual and practical gifts that You give us,

for You to use through us, to speak of You in this world and to bring
the good news of Jesus to all peoples.

We pray Father God, for the gift of healing for many today

for people we know and those on our bulletin sheets who have
ongoing health problems, people who are grieving the loss of a
loved one and people who suffer from mental health difficulties.

Touch them today, by your Holy Spirit to give them strength for
today and bright hope for tomorrow.

Help us to know you more as we walk through this life guided by and
following in our Lord’s footsteps.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Father God as we all hopefully have warm homes,
remind us to spare a thought for those who don't have that luxury.
Those who have been displaced through war, homelessness (often through
no fault of their own), those who have had to flee from difficult situations,
and those who haven't enough money to pay rent and bills.
Thank you for all those who help others this Christmas time and
through the colder winter months.
We know that Jesus understands each circumstance; our
Lord Jesus was born in a cold, draughty stable but helped through the
kindness of the innkeeper.
May we, Father, by Your grace, hear what You are saying to us,
may we see what You would have us do and may we always continue to
learn to be like Jesus, our precious Lord and Saviour.

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your only Son
our saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Collect:
Eternal God,
as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,
so we wait for his coming in glory;
bring us through the birth pangs
of this present age
to see, with her, our great salvation
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer:
And may the Lord when he comes
find us watching and waiting,
now and at all times.

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 forever.
Amen.

*Usually, at this point in the service, we take up our offering;
let us pause for a moment to bring ourselves and
all that we offer to God and give Him thanks.*

Song: Do you hear what I hear?
(click link) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrB3Yj_GtOQ

Blessing:

May God himself, the God of peace,
make you perfect and holy,
and keep you safe and blameless,
in spirit, soul and body,
for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;
and the blessing of God almighty
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with us, and all those whom we love,
this day and always.

Amen.

*As we come to the end of this service, we can remember each other as
we have tea, coffee and biscuits, and continue to pray for each other.*