

2nd before Advent - Sunday 15th November

Opening Antiphon

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
The holy One, is here;
Come bow before him now
With reverence and fear
In him no sin is found
We stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
The holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around;
He burns with holy fire,
With splendour he is crowned:
How awesome is the sight
Our radiant king of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place:
He comes to cleanse and heal,
To minister his grace -
No work too hard for him.
In faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place. *David Evans*

Call to worship:

Let us worship God:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen**

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of Preparation:

Lord, speak to us

that we may hear your word.

Move among us

that we may see your glory.

Receive our prayers

that we may learn to trust you. Amen.

Penitential Rite

God shows his love for us

in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Let us then show our love for him

by confessing our sins in penitence and faith *cf Romans 5.8*

Christ came in humility to share our lives:

forgive our pride and self sufficiency

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ came with good news for all people:

forgive our silence.

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Christ came in love to a world of suffering:

forgive our self-centredness.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

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**

Gloria for today

Let us give glory to the Father, Through the Son
In the Holy Spirit,
For God has made us his people,
And calls us to sing his praises.

Blessed are you, Lord God:
Blessed are you for ever.
Holy is your name:
Blessed are you for ever.
Great is your mercy for your people:
Blessed are you for ever. Amen!

Collect

Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son was revealed
to destroy the works of the devil
and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life:
grant that we, having this hope,
may purify ourselves even as he is pure;
that when he shall appear in power and great glory
we may be made like him
in his eternal and glorious kingdom;
where he is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

1st Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 (NIV)

The Day of the Lord

5 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, **2** for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **3** While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. **5** You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. **6** So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. **7** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. **8** But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. **9** For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. **10** He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. **11** Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Response:

Purify my heart
Let me be as gold and precious silver
Purify my heart
Let me be as gold, pure gold

Purify my heart
Cleanse me from within

And make me holy
Purify my heart
Cleanse me from my sin, deep within

Refiner's fire
My heart's one desire
Is to be holy
Set apart for You, Lord
I choose to be holy
Set apart for You, my Master
Ready to do Your will. *Brian Doerksen*

Gospel Acclamation

**Alleluia, Alleluia.
Your words are Spirit Lord and they are life
You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia** *Jn 6:63:68*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to
Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Matthew 25:14-30 New International Version (NIV) The Parable of the Bags of Gold

14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. **15** To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. **16** The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. **17** So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. **18** But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

19 “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. **20** The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

21 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

22 “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

23 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

24 “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. **25** So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

26 “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? **27** Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

28 “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. **29** For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. **30** And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

I wonder how many of us bury our gifts? There are so many reasons why not all the gifts that God lavishes on his people for his people are not used...

Sometimes people simply haven't had a life opportunity that would enable them to discover or nurture a gift they have been given. One of my boys' first piano teachers had not even met a piano until he entered the 6th form at school. There was a piano in the common room . . . and in his two years in the 6th form he went from never having touched a piano to grade 8 and teaching. I guess if he had never touched a piano he would never have discovered what a gift he had - and would never have been able to nurture that gift of music in my children.

There are Gifts too, that we often don't realise are gifts - hospitality, knitting, needlework, gardening etc - given for the beauty of the earth, for nightgowns for prem babies, blanket squares for blankets for disaster zones, banners and altar linen for worship in church...

Then there are Gifts we have squashed out of us when people have made fun of us. or simply failed to encourage us so that we have stopped believing in ourselves. Our culture is not always kind to those who are learning... and while there may be a need sometimes in love, to tell someone that maybe their gifts lie in a different direction - too often people are discouraged before they have barely begun. We do need to cultivate a culture of support and appreciation in which gifts

can be tried, appreciated, and nurtured in thanks to God, the giver of the gifts - and for the benefit of all.

And if we have allowed a gift to be squashed away in us (as I have done !) then we may need to say sorry to God and to forgive the people who hurt us and forgive ourselves too! And there is always the chance to be open to the new things that God is always doing. . .

Our highly competitive culture can mean that only the very best are considered gifted - that is even the language we use isn't it - but slightly wonky cakes can be just as delicious and welcoming as the perfect specimens that look **so** gorgeous we barely dare to cut them. We need choirs as well as soloists, good neighbours and carers as well as doctors and consultants, people who can make do and mend as well as fashion designers.... And I would say that these are not greater and lesser gifts in the way that our society often suggests - but different gifts and all **so** very necessary.

Sometimes those who have found the spot where their gifts can be used - are reluctant to move over and make room for others with similar giftings. I remember a priest in a church we used to go to, asking for extra cleaners for the church ready for Easter. He told people to come along at 7.30 on Wednesday to help. . . The existing cleaners however, chose to meet at 5.30 - so that when the "new people" came the work was all done and their enthusiasm deflated. . . The giver of the gifts knows that there is plenty of work for us all!

And perhaps the gif is not about what we can **do**, maybe the gift - our gift - is simply about who we are.... We are each called to be a unique part of the image of God shown forth in

the world: each with our unique qualities and personality. Aren't there people among us who just by who they are (and they might not even be aware of it) show us how to be kind, generous, welcoming, encouraging, cheerful, gracious? They somehow simply embody the qualities that they naturally and unconsciously teach us...

Sometimes it is about our own courage . . . I know that I have said to God - if you want me to do **that** - you will need to write it on the wall in capital letters. . .

There are times when what God is calling us to do will involve great vulnerability and great effort. For me, going into ministry was like that. I never was a person who stood up in front of people. - and I wasn't excited about going through so many interviews (selection panel is truly terrifying!) - and then of course there was another degree to do. It is helpful at times like that to have a reasonable certainty that you are doing what God is asking of you... that "he who has called you will equip you" - and that "he is faithful to his promises".

Of course some people are stunningly gifted and amazingly confident in their gifting - and amazingly generous in the offering of their gifts.

And I suppose that sometimes when people bury their talents it may be about being lazy - ungenerous - or preoccupied with other things. . .

Some of us just find it so hard to realise - to believe - that God chooses to use and to need us - all of us - for the spread of the Gospel, the salvation of souls and to advance his Kingdom

Each week we read the Gospel - maybe as if it's work was done when Matthew Mark Luke and John put their pens down!

The Acts of the Apostles - of course tell us of some of the wondrous acts of God and his faithful followers that came next - and then. . .

You and I we are the writers of the next chapters of the story in the ways we live and move and have our being and spread the Good news of Jesus Christ around us. . . that is unless we simply choose to bury our talents in the ground. Let us choose instead to work with our God for the spread of the Gospel, the salvation of souls and the advance his Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Response

**Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mold me,
Fill me, use me,
Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.**

**Melt me, Mold me,
Fill me, use me,
Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.** *Daniel Iverson*

Our Declaration of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God - using the words of the Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Intercessions: Based on some prayers published by David Adam...

Blessed are you, Lord our God,
You have created each of us in a unique way.
You have given us all talents and abilities
so that we may love and serve You, and each other
Blessed are you Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Lord, giver of all good gifts,
we give you thanks for all you have given us.
May we share our talents and use them
to the benefit of others and for your glory.

We pray today for all who use their gifts
to tell others of your love
and to proclaim the Gospel in words or action.

(Pause)

We ask you blessing on all who minister to others

Giver of all good gifts

Hear us and help us to live to your glory.

Lord, giver of all good gifts,
We ask your blessing upon all artists, musicians, craftspeople
gardeners, architects, scientists, politicians
and all who use their gifts to improve our world.

We pray for doctors and nurses, all medical practitioners
For emergency personnel, air sea and mountain rescue,
For social workers, carers and good neighbours
All who use their gifts to save, to serve, and to heal

Giver of all good gifts

Hear us and help us to live to your glory.

Lord, giver of all good gifts, bless us and our loved ones
We pray that our homes may be places
where talents are fostered and given the chance to grow
We ask your blessing on all schools and places of learning
and all who help others to develop skills

(Pause)

Giver of all good gifts

Hear us and help us to live to your glory.

Lord, giver of all good gifts,
bless all who are thwarted in their ability
through illness or lack of opportunity.

We pray for all who are struggling
due to poverty or hunger

And we hold in our hearts before you
all those we know who are ill
and who have asked for our prayers...

Giver of all good gifts

Hear us and help us to live to your glory.

We remember our loved ones departed
who are now at home with you -
giving thanks again for their love and their lives,
precious memories

Lord, giver of all good gifts,
We thank you for the gift of life eternal.

**Merciful Father: Accept these prayers for the sake of your
Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

Let's pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**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.**

Notices and Birthdays

The BLESSING and SENDING

God of power,
may the boldness of your Spirit transform us,
may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,
may the gifts of your Spirit equip us
to serve and worship you
now and always. Amen.

And the blessing.....

Final acclamation: Hymn of the day

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
reclothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,

let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.
O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love!

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!

Sending

Go into the world
to walk in God's light,
to rejoice in God's love
and to reflect God's glory. **Amen**

What gifts, skills and talents has God given to you?

How can you say “Thank You” to God for them?

How can you use them to help other people?

