

The Second Sunday before Advent
15th November 2026

In the name of the + Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Prayer of Preparation

Faithful Lord,
whose steadfast love never ceases
and whose mercies never come to an end:
grant us the grace to trust you
and to receive the gifts of your love,
new every morning,
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

HYMN

O God of Bethel, by whose hand
thy people still are fed;
who through this earthly pilgrimage
hast all our fathers led:

Our vows, our prayers, we now present
before thy throne of grace:
O God of Israel, be the God
of their succeeding race.

Through each perplexing path of life
our wandering footsteps guide;
give us each day our daily bread,
and raiment fit provide.

O spread thy covering wings around,
till all our wanderings cease,
and at our Father's loved abode
our souls arrive in peace!

Such blessings from thy gracious hand
our humble prayers implore;
and thou shalt be our covenant God
and portion evermore.

Confession

Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.

Absolution

Almighty God,
who in Jesus Christ has given us
a kingdom that cannot be destroyed,
forgive us our sins, +
open our eyes to God's truth,
strengthen us to do God's will
and give us the joy of his kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The 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.

A Reading from The Old Testament
Zephaniah 1. 7, 12-end

7 Be silent before the Sovereign Lord,
for the day of the Lord is near.
The Lord has prepared a sacrifice;
he has consecrated those he has invited.

12 At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps
and punish those who are complacent,
who are like wine left on its dregs,
who think, 'The Lord will do nothing,
either good or bad.'
13 Their wealth will be plundered,
their houses demolished.
Though they build houses,
they will not live in them;
though they plant vineyards,
they will not drink the wine."

14 The great day of the Lord is near—
near and coming quickly.
The cry on the day of the Lord is bitter;
the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry.
15 That day will be a day of wrath—
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of trouble and ruin,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and blackness—
16 a day of trumpet and battle cry

against the fortified cities
and against the corner towers.

17 “I will bring such distress on all people
that they will grope about like those who are blind,
because they have sinned against the Lord.
Their blood will be poured out like dust
and their entrails like dung.
18 Neither their silver nor their gold
will be able to save them
on the day of the Lord’s wrath.”

In the fire of his jealousy
the whole earth will be consumed,
for he will make a sudden end
of all who live on the earth.

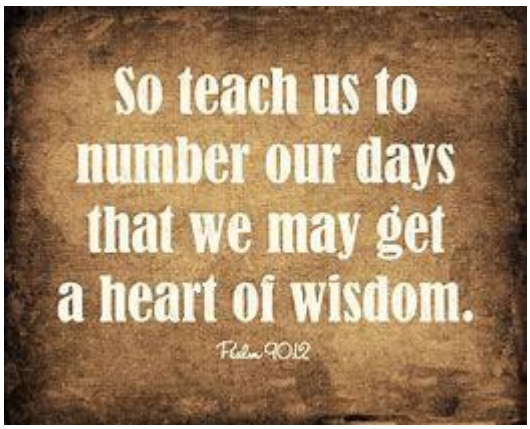
This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Psalm 90

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place
throughout all generations.
2 Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

3 You turn people back to dust,
saying, “Return to dust, you mortals.”
4 A thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.
5 Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—
they are like the new grass of the morning:
6 In the morning it springs up new,
but by evening it is dry and withered.

7 We are consumed by your anger
and terrified by your indignation.
8 You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.
9 All our days pass away under your wrath;
we finish our years with a moan.
10 Our days may come to seventy years,
or eighty, if our strength endures;
yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.
11 If only we knew the power of your anger!
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due.
12 Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.



13 Relent, Lord! How long will it be?
Have compassion on your servants.
14 Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love,
that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.
15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
for as many years as we have seen trouble.
16 May your deeds be shown to your servants,
your splendour to their children.

17 May the favour of the Lord our God rest on us;
establish the work of our hands for us—
yes, establish the work of our hands.

A Reading from The New Testament
1 Thessalonians 5 1-11

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 labour 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

HYMN

Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour,
first-begotten from the dead.
Thou alone, our strong defender,
liftest up thy people's head.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Jesus, true and living bread!
Jesus, true and living bread!

Here our humblest homage pay we,
here in loving reverence bow;
here for faith's discernment pray we,
lest we fail to know thee now.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou art here, we ask not how.
Thou art here, we ask not how

Though the lowliest form doth veil thee
as of old in Bethlehem,
here as there thine angels hail thee,
branch and flower of Jesse's stem.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
We in worship join with them.
We in worship join with them.

Paschal Lamb, thine offering, finished
once for all when thou was slain,
in its fullness undiminished
shall for evermore remain.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Cleansing souls from every stain.
Cleansing souls from every stain.

Life-imparting heavenly Manna,
stricken Rock with streaming side,
heaven and earth with loud hosanna
worship thee, the Lamb who died.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Risen, ascended, glorified!
Risen, ascended, glorified!

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.
My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord
I know them and they follow me
Alleluia.

The Gospel

The holy Gospel is written in the 25th Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew beginning at the 14th verse.

Glory be to thee, O Lord

14 'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; 15 to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16 The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. 17 In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. 18 But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." 21 His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." 22 And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." 23 His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." 24 Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." 26 But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30 As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise be to thee, O Christ

Reflection

Zephaniah is preaching in the closing decades of the sixth century before Christ, during the reign of King Josiah. His visions of the Day of the Lord are of impending disaster. It is not a joyful event; the prophets emphasised its element of judgement. Shockingly it is God's wrath that does the damage; a holy God turns against a sinful people.

What is particular about Zephaniah's voice is his new understanding of the universal rule of the God of Israel – it is not just about the fortunes of a people but of the whole earth. All creation including the natural world is implicated. Heard for the first time this would have communicated what we would describe as 'global disaster'. In the face of this Judah was told:

'Be silent before the Sovereign Lord'

Imagine everything falling silent – the airwaves falling silent, no traffic no industry, no human noise. We may have thought that the first lockdown was a bit like that but not really. It would be momentous. No one in the world left out; all creation is the same before its creator.

St Benedict began his Rule (teaching for his monks) with the injunction 'Listen!' It would do us good to stop the internal chatter and turn off the media feed and just attempt to 'listen'. Stop for a bit and refocus – what is really important. In the psalms we are warned to 'number our days'.

'So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.'

We live as if we had an endless supply, we do not. Speak to someone for whom this is a numbered reality, and you will get a different view, but it is true for us all.

Paul exhorts us to vigilance.

> 'So then let us not sleep [in spiritual indifference] as the rest [of the world does], but let us keep wide awake [alert and cautious] and let us be sober [self-controlled, calm, and wise].' (Amplified Bible)

The idea of being alert is in the parable Jesus tells. From when the master left, action was required to preserve what was entrusted to them; they would need to take risks, invest, work hard. Just maintaining what was given was not good enough. We are called to risky, faithful, holiness, something from which many will shy away.

The idea of urgency is in all three readings. The danger is that we do not see the importance of our time, our opportunities. Note how the master gave to each according to their ability and expected a return from each. Faith, to be worth anything at all, shows itself in our action; we move out in belief in something bigger than us. We will engage, we will take risks, we will have 'something' to show for what we have been given.

By using their 'talents' the first two contributed to society, they engaged with others in a process which, taken to its extreme, can be said to have universal implications for it affects the Kingdom of God.

Holding back, keeping what we have, guarding our own interests means we fail to participate in this interconnectedness which is at the heart of the Kingdom. The readings stress our common humanity; we each have a part to play as we are connected to each other.

What if we thought of 'talents' as that which has been given to us to do something with? How can I risk and invest mercy, my time, my actions – will I have anything to show when I am called to account?

The 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.

Intercessions

Let us pray for the church and for the world and let us thank God for his goodness.

For the Church remembering particularly those for whom professing faith in Jesus brings discrimination and persecution, even risk to their lives. For ourselves that we may sense the urgency of the time and share boldly with others the gift of salvation and wholeness found in our Lord Jesus.

For the King our government, leaders of nations whose decisions and actions affect us all. For wisdom and truth that they may act with integrity seeking the common good.

For those parts of our world ravaged by conflict where instability prevents any possibility of a settled life, and for all refugees fleeing conflict. For those who suffer through disease or for lack of food and clean water. For the work of aid agencies worldwide, for peacekeepers and peacemakers and all who work to ease the suffering of others. For the lonely, the despairing and the fearful. The unemployed, homeless, deserted or friendless. The sick, disturbed, and those damaged by life.

For those whom we love, the special people you have given to us wherever they may be, our friends, the close ones and those we sometimes forget. For those who have died, whom we remember in love. For those who mourn.

These and all the silent prayers of our hearts we offer to you.

Merciful father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ our lord. Amen

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.

Heavenly Lord,
you long for the world's salvation:
stir us from apathy,
restrain us from excess
and revive in us new hope
that all creation will one day be healed
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

We pray for God's blessing

God the Father,
By whose glory Christ was raised from the dead
Strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life;
And the blessing of God who created you
Jesus the Christ who saves you
And the Spirit who is within you
Be with you and with all for whom you pray
Now and always Amen

HYMN

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim though this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fiery cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through;
strong Deliverer,
be thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
bear me through the swelling current,
land me safe on Canaan's side;
songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee.

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