

**Welcome** To our service wherever you are listening on this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday before Advent and let us welcome God to be with us

**Prayer** Come Holy Spirit into our churches, Homes, Care Centres, and our hearts that Jesus may be made known to us as we worship

**Hymn** Thy Kingdom come O God *By Lewis Henley CCLI Music licence 2370586*

1. Thy Kingdom come O God, thy rule O Christ begin;  
Break with thine iron rod the tyrannies of sin.
2. Where is thy reign of peace, and purity and love?  
When shall all hatred cease, as in the realms above?
3. When comes the promised time when wars shall be no more;  
And lust, oppression crime shall flee thy face before?
4. We pray thee, Lord, arise, and come in thy great might;  
Revive our longing eyes which languish for thy sight.
5. O'er lands both near and far thick darkness broodeth yet:  
Arise, O Morning Star, arise, and never set.

### Readings

Matthew 25:14-30

- 14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.
- 15 "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.
- 16 "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents.
- 17 "And likewise he who had received two gained two more also.
- 18 "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.
- 19 "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.
- 20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.'
- 21 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'
- 22 "He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.'
- 23 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'
- 24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.
- 25 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'
- 26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.
- 27 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.
- 28 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.
- 29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.
- 30 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This is the Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

- 1 Concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.
- 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.
- 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.
- 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.
- 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.
- 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.
- 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.
- 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.
- 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.
- 11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

This is the Word of the Lord

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### Reflection

This period Before Advent is the time when we celebrate the coming King and the Kingdom of God - in our day and in what the Bible calls 'the last days'

There are 2 opposite views about the 'last days', and where the world is going.

- One group believes that life will improve till (as one of our carols puts it) *comes round the Age of Gold*

- On the other hand people say that the world will deteriorate to the point where only Christ the King can fix it, a time when, as we declare in our Creeds, 'Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead'

He will return to reign and change everything.

Zephaniah, the Old Testament prophet, 600yrs before Jesus wrote in ch1:14 : *The great day of the LORD is near; it hastens quickly* (changes will happen so fast) . *The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter* (it's unsettling) *when the mighty men shall cry out with their demands. That day is a day of wrath, of trouble and distress; of devastation; desolation; darkness and gloomy depression, of clouds, of trumpets and alarm against the fortified cities and high towers.*

God says: *"I will bring distress upon men, And they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD; Their blood shall be poured out like dust, their flesh like refuse. Their silver and their gold won't be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; The whole land shall be devoured by the fire.*

Zephaniah sounds very much like he is reporting the news in our day. And that's what the 'last days' will be like.

S Paul in 1Thess1 wrote to the Thessalonians (& us) in similar terms

*The Lord shall come as a thief in the night, as you yourselves know perfectly well. When they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And none shall escape.*

The Bible tells us that these 'Kingdom of God' times will be about both blessings and troubles, and will culminate in the return of the King; when everyone will have to give an account of what we have done

Jesus in his stories in Mtt25 talked about a time of 'calling to account'; a day of 'sorting things out'; an occasion of repayment or reward for what people have done (or not done) with the life and gifts God has given to us

If God sends the sun and rain on the just & the unjust, & provides for our needs .....then, we are accountable for all the things he has given to us. We are *stewards* of his gifts; and answerable for what he has entrusted to us.

The question is: What have we done with the days & times, gifts & opportunities that he has given to us?

When we stand before him what will we say to him and what will He say to us?

Jesus says in Matthew 25

- to the faithful he will pronounce his favour; *'Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter the joy of your Lord.*

- to the sinful, segregation; to the lazy, loss; *Cast the wicked, lazy, & unprofitable servant into the outer darkness*

The Day of the Lord will be a day of sorting out

Zephaniah says: *It shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their heart, 'The LORD will not do good, Nor will He do evil.'* In other words He's not bothered one way or the other - we can please ourselves!

*But God says "No" - it doesn't work like that. Their goods shall become booty, and their houses a desolation; They shall build houses, but not inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine."*

There are consequences to carelessness, as there are rewards for readiness.

So St Paul concludes: *Let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. Those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.*

*Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.*

God wants to give us grace, not judgement

2Corinthians 5:10 bluntly tells us: *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body*

Over this time of Advent, let's get ready for the glorious coming of our King Jesus, seeking his forgiveness and doing what he wants, so that when he comes we might be welcomed into the 'heavenly kingdom'

#### **Hymn**

Seek ye first the kingdom of God

By Karen Lafferty

CCLI Music licence

2370586

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness,

And all these things shall be added unto you. Allelu, Alleluiah

Alleluiah, Alleluiah, Alleluiah, Allelu, Alleluiah

#### **Confession**

We pray Search me O God and know my heart; try me and see if there be any wicked way in me

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

You tell us to Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. But we have failed to obey

Christ have mercy Christ have mercy

Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

Our Lord Jesus promises pardons every one who seeks his face saying: Your sins are forgiven you, go & sin no more

**Creed** We say together the 3fold declaration, *Christ has died .....*

**Christ has died Christ is risen Christ will come again**

## Prayers

To the words *Your will be done* we say **your Kingdom come**

O God, the creator and preserver of all we pray for people in every kind of need:

Make your ways known of earth, and your saving health among all nations

Your will be done **your Kingdom come**

We pray for the good estate of the worldwide church;

Guide and govern us by your good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians

may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace in righteousness of life

Your will be done **your Kingdom come**

We commend to your fatherly goodness all those who are in any ways afflicted or distressed in body, mind, or spirit

Comfort and relieve them in their need, give them patience in their sufferings, and bring them out of all their afflictions

Your will be done **your Kingdom come**

We remember those who have gone before us in the peace of Christ,

and we give you praise for all your faithful ones, rejoicing in the communion of the saints

Your will be done **your Kingdom come**

Hasten the day, Lord, when people will come from east and west, from north and south,

and sit together at table in your kingdom, where we shall see your Son, our Saviour, in all his glory

Your will be done **your Kingdom come**

**The Lord's Prayer** we say together

**Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name**

**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven**

**Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us**

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen**

## Hymn

Our God reigns

*By Leonard E Smith Jnr*

*CCLI Music licence 2370586*

1. How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, good news  
Announcing peace, proclaiming news of happiness: Our God reign, our God reigns.  
*Ref: Our God reigns; Our God reigns; Our God reigns; Our God reigns*
2. You watchmen, lift your voices joyfully as one, shout for your King, Your King!  
See eye to eye, the Lord restoring Sion; Our God reign, our God reigns.  
*Ref: Our God reigns; Our God reigns; Our God reigns; Our God reigns*
3. Waste places of Jerusalem, break forth with joy! We are redeemed, redeemed,  
The Lord has saved and comforted his people; Our God reign, our God reigns.  
*Ref: Our God reigns; Our God reigns; Our God reigns; Our God reigns*
4. Ends of the earth, see the salvation of our God! Jesus is Lord, is Lord!  
Before the nations he has bared his holy arm; Our God reign, our God reigns.  
*Ref: Our God reigns; Our God reigns; Our God reigns; Our God reigns*

## Blessing

Now to the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God,

be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and for ever **Amen**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you

and those for whom you pray, this day and for evermore **Amen**

*Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England,*

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