

Service of Morning Worship – Remembrance Sunday

Introduction

Grace and peace to us from God.
May he fill us with truth and joy.

We pray together:

Loving Lord,
fill us with your life-giving, joy-giving, peace-giving presence,
that we may praise you now with our lips, in our hearts
and all day long with our lives,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Preparation

Before we come to confession we pray together:

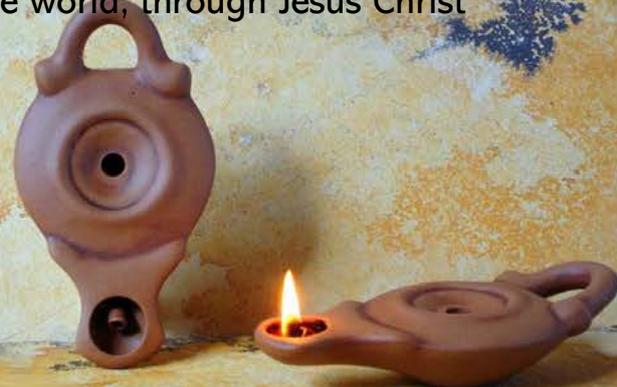
Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Confession

The word of God is living and active. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. All is laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we give account. And so, we confess our sins in penitence and faith, thankful of the assurance of God's forgiveness.

Our God, for love of you we desire to hate and forsake all sins
by which we have ever displeased you;
and we resolve by the help of your grace
to commit them no more;
and to avoid all opportunities of sin.
Help us to do this, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May God who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to be our Saviour
forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve him in the world, through Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen.



Readings

1 Thessalonians 4: 13-end

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Matt 25: 1-13

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

"At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

"Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

"'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

"But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

"Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!'

"But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.'

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Sermon

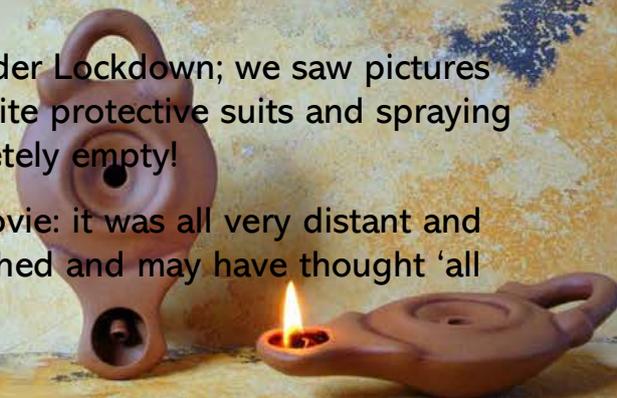
Get Ready

Do you remember, some dim and distant while ago, the mention of a place called Wuhan in the news?

Who had ever heard of Wuhan for goodness sake?

And we began to hear about the whole town being under Lockdown; we saw pictures on our televisions of people covered head to toe in white protective suits and spraying everything along the streets.....which were completely empty!

It almost seemed as if we were watching a futuristic movie: it was all very distant and removed from our lives here – all so far away. We watched and may have thought 'all



those poor people' but then just got on with our seemingly safe little lives. The name coronavirus and its effects didn't mean much to us.

Then we heard about disturbing news from Italy. This coronavirus was running amok up and down the country and the reality of so many people dying seemed more shocking – probably because Italy is more familiar to us than Wuhan and much closer to home!

But it was still 'over there', and we were on our little island doing our own thing.

So, when coronavirus actually became a reality for us, were we prepared for it?

Certainly not when it came to having enough PPE for medical staff and carers!

Suddenly we were in Lockdown; our streets were empty; and we were desperately trying to stop the services of our NHS becoming completely overwhelmed and breaking down. The fact that the whole service has been grossly underfunded for years, and the funds it has had have been mishandled, misappropriated, and wasted, is another issue.

But it seemed, almost without warning, we were in an unknown situation, fighting an unknown enemy and panic spread like wildfire!

However, **should** we have been more prepared? We had seen all the warning signs through the media that a possible pandemic was heading our way as well. Yet we seemed to be caught 'on the hop'.

In our Gospel reading 5 of the 10 virgins weren't prepared and we're told that they were foolish.

So, what's Jesus telling us in this parable?

In a nutshell, Jesus is using it to clarify what it means to be ready for his return and how to live until he comes again. The story is set in the context of a wedding and the tradition at the time was that on the day of the wedding the bridegroom went to the bride's house for the ceremony. Then the bride and groom, along with a great procession, returned to the groom's house where a feast took place, often lasting a whole week.

All 10 virgins would have been familiar with this protocol but only 5 of them factored in the possibility that there might be a hic-up – in this case the groom was late coming – and took extra oil for their lamps.

When they heard that the groom was on his way the foolish girls had run out of oil for their lamps and had to scurry off to try and rectify their lack of preparation. This resulted in them, not only being too late to enter into the procession, but also being refused entry to the feast on the grounds that they weren't known to the wedding party – they hadn't been among the procession.

They weren't ready! They missed out on the feast.

What is Jesus telling us to be ready for through this story?

Well, again, in a nutshell, his return!



It's nearly Christmas when we remember and celebrate his coming to earth for the first time as a tiny baby. It was a very quiet affair happening out of the public eye in a stable; and only a very few were aware of it.

However, when Jesus comes again there'll be nothing quiet about it!

Our reading from Thessalonians tells us that he will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God.

In Revelation chapter 1 it says, 'Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see him'.

It's going to be the biggest occasion ever!

In the context of this Thessalonian reading Paul was talking to the church of believers who were wondering what would happen to those believers who had already died when Jesus returns. He wanted them to understand that death is not the end of the story because when Christ returns, all believers – dead and alive – will be reunited, never to suffer or die again.

These few verses are a great comfort for all believers and challenges us to encourage one another when a loved one dies.

When we have faith in Jesus we need not despair in the face of death, or when world events take a tragic turn. God is going to turn our tragedies into triumphs, our poverty into riches, our pain to glory, and our defeat to victory. All believers throughout history will stand reunited in God's very presence, safe and secure.

This truly is wonderful news and should help us to get through the worst of times.....but we must never be complacent!

What about those we love dearly who die without a faith in Christ and who therefore won't be participants in this safe and secure place with God? They will be where God isn't, which means where love is non-existent, which means a bad place.

If we don't want that for them we must faithfully and continually pray for them – that they will ultimately realise who Jesus is and put their trust in.

If we are serious about wanting them with us, among the crowd of believers when Jesus returns, we will pray for their salvation, pray earnestly, pray without ceasing.

Creed

Let us declare our faith in God:

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.



We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Intercessions

Faithful God, help us to recognise the promises you give us. You promise to return again and all will know who you are, you promise to be present with us through the Holy Spirit, you promise to guide, strengthen and lead us. We can and should hold on to these promises and not be surprised when you fulfil them again and again. Remind us who you are, prepare our hearts to receive and share your promises with others. Help us to live in hope and expectation fixing our eyes on you.

Lord your world has many people who wish to hold onto power and authority for themselves in a vain hope that power and attention is all that matters. It makes us despair when we hear the voices of those who should set the best example set the worst. But God you tell us and show us that leaders should serve with humility and for the good of everyone. Raise up local, national and world leaders that hold true to servant leadership, looking to improve lives and enable harmony. We know you can work through the craziest circumstances and we bring before you those areas in our world known to us whether they dominate our headlines or not.

Almighty God may you fill your people with love and strength, build your church in our world on strong foundations. Let all who profess to know you stand up for truth and justice. Bring us together even where we cannot be together, let us know that what unites is stronger than lockdown or restrictions. Help us to encourage one another and continue to share our faith with those we contact. May your church continue to shine as an area of love and hope to all, may we be as open and welcoming as you were to those you met.

Loving God it breaks our hearts and brings many emotions to the surface when we see friends and families suffering. We see those who are ill through disease or sickness, we see people who struggle with their mental health, loneliness, grief or hardship. Lord let us always offer those we know to you and help us to be there for our loved ones in whatever way is needed both practically and as moral and spiritual support. Help us to shine a light in the darkness even if that light seems small. In a moment of quiet we bring them to you now.



Let us now continue in prayer using the words our Saviour 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 for ever. Amen.

Blessing

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.

