

Morning Service 15th November 2020

Thank you for joining us for this morning service, whether you're watching live on facebook or catching up on youtube. I'm Rev John Musson, vicar of Cudham and Downe and I'm joined by Helen Musson, Ordinand at St Augustines college and who's also looking forward to becoming curate at Christ Church Orpington in September 2021.

*You'll find the words of the service on the church website pcd.org.uk. Please say the words in **bold***

Today we hear St Paul remind all believers to keep our perspectives and our lifestyles focused on Jesus Christ, who one day will return as Lord and King. Are we ready?

The Greeting and opening prayer

We gather here, at the end of one week
and the beginning of another,
we ask the Lord to meet us as we worship:

God of all time,
you made time and you entered time to be with us.
We move from ordinary time to extraordinary time,
and in all this, we wait for you.
Keep our hearts aflame with the things that please you:
mercy, humility, justice.
And as we turn to worship you,
we worship you in time, in spirit and in truth.

Amen.

Lord, sometimes we are not ready
to worship you. (place palms over eyes)
Thank you that you are already here to meet us. (take hands away)

Amen.

HYMN

- 1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.**

- 2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee Lord;
be thou my great Father, and I thy true son;
be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.**

- 3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.**

- 4 Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart;
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.**

- 5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.**

O Lord of decades and days,
centuries and seconds,
we stop now, for this moment,
and turn together to you –
who holds all time in your hand.
Make us ready to receive you,

as we gather here today.

Amen.

We now spend time reflecting on our need to say sorry and to hear God forgive us. We shall be hearing in our bible reading the call to 'wake up' and so we reflect on that now.

Jesus, you call us to follow you.

When we prefer to hide in the shadows:

Lord, wake us up to hear your voice.

When we have turned a deaf ear to injustice:

Lord, wake us up to hear your voice.

When we are too full of our own opinions:

Lord, wake us up to hear your voice. Amen.

May the God of love
bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer for Today – 2nd Sunday before Advent

Generous God, you give us gifts and make them grow:
though our faith is small as mustard seed,
make it grow to your glory and the flourishing of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Bible Reading 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

5 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ²for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While 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.

Talk

Thanks to all those who were able to join us either online or as spectators for our Remembrance Sunday services last weekend. It was a special time. Here we are today and for the next two weeks with live streamed services, like we were earlier in the year. Well, not quite. Having experienced lockdown, then reopening the church for Sunday services, this feels a bit different. Different in that there seems to be a definite end and also it's now November, and only two weeks before Advent, that time of preparation before Christmas. This week sees the beginning of the Celtic Advent, 40 days of reflection and prayer focusing on what is called the 'three advents' – the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in his birth at Bethlehem, the coming of Christ daily to us as we pray, and the coming of Christ at the end of time. We are planning daily reflections during December, and you are welcome to join in with them. It's the third advent, the return of Christ, which is the focus of our bible reading this morning, as we conclude our readings from St Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica. Basically Paul asks 'are we ready?' Christmas shopping and preparation is going to have a different feel this year, and some of us might be glad not to have to be in crowded shopping centres and supermarkets, and maybe too our preparation for the return of Jesus, or facing our own mortality is all too real this year.

You might know the song 'what have the romans ever done for us' from Monty Python's life of Brian – Paul echoes a common phrase of his time –

the Romans did, humanly speaking, offer peace and security, although like all political powers, both then and now, for the ordinary people the promise and daily reality were poles apart. What about those of us who call ourselves Christians? What can Jesus offer, and how can we best prepare? To use Spike Milligan's phrase – we are called to 'be alert', as our country needs more 'lerts.' We've all been more aware of our surroundings since March, and while being in a constant state of awareness can be damaging to our mental wellbeing, there is a right sense that Paul calls us to of being awake rather than asleep, sober rather than drunk, faithful to Christ rather than faithless. He calls us, as he does in greater detail in Ephesians, to put on PPE – faith, hope and love. Keeping awake to developing and growing these three fruits of the Spirit in our lives will protect us, says Paul, from the trials of the world around us, and prepare us better whether we live or die, whether Christ returns today or in the future. Paul concludes by saying these things are to be an encouragement to us, and an encouragement for us to share with each other.

The Creed

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on 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.**

The prayers –

We pray to God, who is always ready –
for those overtaken with demands.

Give rest, O Lord.

For those overburdened with anxieties.

Give rest, O Lord.

For those overcome with debt.

Give relief, O Lord.

For those oppressed by powers that despise them.

Give salvation, O Lord.

For those in situations they cannot see a way out of.

Give freedom, O Lord.

For those in need of hope.

Give hope, O Lord. Amen.

Reflective prayer: with Music for reflection – what does the Lord require of you?

What do you carry with you? Have a moment to think about some of what's in your pockets, purse or bag. What do these things tell us about what we're ready for? Perhaps you have some medicine that will help alleviate pain. Or a charger to help keep your phone available. Or breath fresheners. Or pen. Or paper. Or a mask.

What might we carry with us – in our hearts and lives – that will keep us ready for the return of Christ?

God of readiness,
you are always ready to show care,
especially to those who are used to feeling alone.

Give us readiness,

**so that when we see someone who is alone
we can be quick to kindness,
and happy to help.
Because you are always quick to kindness.
Amen.**

Jesus taught us to call God our Father,
so in faith and trust we pray:

**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.**

HYMN

- 1 Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.**

- 2 Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
thy justice like mountains high soaring above
thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.**

- 3 To all life thou givest, to both great and small;**

**in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
and wither and perish, but naught changest thee.**

**4 Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight
all laud we would render: O help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.**

Closing prayer

O God, you have made us your people,
we who once were not a people.
You have spread your arms wide and welcomed all.
Your invitation is always open, always ready to extend and expand:

**Send us now, in the joy of your love
and with the mission of sharing your Good news with all.
Father, Son and Spirit,
you dwell in community and call us to community.
Source, Light and Love, you welcome all.
Amen**

Thank you for joining us in worship today. Details of our next services are found on our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/PCDChurches/> where you can watch the service live or catch up later, and you'll find this week's notice sheet and other useful information on the church website pcd.org.uk

Next week, Rach will be leading a service via zoom – please contact us via the admin@pcd.org.uk email address to be sent the details.

Please also contact the Vicar, Rev John Musson or Rev Rach Archer if you need any help or just for a chat! vicar@pcd.org.uk 01959540012

Blessing

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,
who has transformed those we remember today,
raise and strengthen us that we may transform the world;

And may the blessing of God rest upon us;
The blessing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen