



March Team Ministry

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

Welcome

Advent

Sunday November 29th 2020

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 279232 or at andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

Church Services (apart from Funerals) are suspended for the current lockdown. We still have our zoom services, e-newsletters and leaflet deliveries.

Please also access the many options on line for worship and prayer.

From 2nd December the previous pattern of Church Services will resume

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am

St Mary's Sundays 9.15am

St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."

Prayers for this Week

Rend the heavens and come down, O God of the ages! Rouse us from sleep, deliver us from our heedless ways, and form us into a watchful people, that, at the advent of your

Son, he may find us doing what is right, mindful of all you command. Grant this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near: your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

God of unveiled truth, faithful flame in times of darkened sun and waning moon: lift up our unknowing hearts, and waken our sleeping love to announce the coming dawn of unexpected peace; through Jesus Christ, the one who is to come.

Amen.

The Nicene 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.

Meditation

Advent begins. The start of the Church's year. Getting ready for Christmas. Preparing for Christ. Crib figures dusted off and put out. Royal purple drapes in our churches. A change of gear. Advent begins, and soon, but not quite yet those who wish to will be able to gather for church services resuming on 2nd. We bring out the Advent candles dancing in a ring and light them progressively in the "count-up" to Christmas, till finally all are alight and the crown complete.

Traditionally the four purple candles of the four Sundays of Advent have a connection or theme. Patriarchs, prophets, John the Baptist, Mary the mother of Jesus, and the central white one for Jesus at Christmas. Also the Nicene Creed (printed above) has four paragraphs each with a different focus, God as creator, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. So for the next four weeks, the intention for these meditations is to connect and reflect on the candles themes and the Creed paragraphs.

Patriarchs: Probably not a fashionable term; not one which invokes either familiarity or sympathy. We are busy casting patriarchy, patriarchal institutions or attitudes, to the recycling bin. In colloquial terms it now speaks of male dominance, or maybe for stronger terms, male violence or oppression. Surely we cannot be in favour of patriarchy, so where does that leave the patriarchs? Maybe we can name some of the biblical Patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon and so on. If we know their stories we discover they are mixed and complex characters, and not simply role models. They may have God in their lives, but they also seem to have feet of clay. They are set before us as examples of faith, hope and love. Perhaps, if we think of Patriarchs, we see them as people from a previous age; people who lived in so different a world that they may not have much to connect with us today. Maybe, we see previous generations as primitive, intolerant, prejudiced. Maybe, we feel sorry for them for they lived in a much tougher world without the advantages of modern devices, ways, or understandings. Why should we light a candle for them?

Perhaps we need to light candles and remember our forebears, so to curb the arrogance of our generation. Are we really so civilised, so wise or so responsible!? What sort of legacy are we leaving for future generations with our consumption of the resources of creation, our care for the earth? Perhaps the patriarchs (and matriarchs) can remind us that we too have feet of clay, and that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones! So when issues from our collective past come up, slavery, treatment of women, attitudes to mental health or such like, let's not judge our ancestors by the standards of today, rather let's look to what we need to change to continue to walk with God. Let's not be seduced by our technological brilliance and lose the human dimension of life.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

Maker/Creator – we may see this in scientific terms, or we may see it as meaning the source, or the one who had the intention to bring all things into being. I suppose I want to throw in things like, designer, artist and composer too. But it is still an active role, it is not that God once (a long time ago) created (or set the rules) but that he still does. It is not that having made creation he then sat back and watched what happens, it's that God is creative, artistic, transforming. It is an incredibly hopeful picture.

Similarly, **Father**; not just that he once had a son, but that his relationship with us is parental; raising us, watching us grow up, helping and wishing us to be the people we really are, helping us to take risks and learn, and once we have grown up, becoming best friends. God is a parent in nature, in relationship with us and in his actions with us. I have a father, but have never been one (but a grandfather), I had a mother, and could never have been one. So my experience of parenting is limited and imperfect, God's parenting is unlimited and perfect. It's all about love in its many ways and outworkings.

the Almighty: is perhaps the only really technical word in this part of the creed. It reminds us that the God of the Christians is the God of the Jews, the God who the Old Testament bears witness to humanities wrestling with God (connect with Patriarchs earlier). This God, who was thought of as partisan or tribal, is in fact the God for everyone of every race, language, age or inclination. God is both specific and intimate, but also universal and all embracing, that really is *almighty*! This God has faith in us.

all that is, seen and unseen: – Yes this is about the things that we study with the tools of science, and transform with technology, but it is also about similarly understanding and changing in the disciplines of psychology, economics, sociology etc. Unseen things; not just what we have not yet discovered or understood, but those realities beyond measurement such as faith, hope and love.

And covid? A malevolent creation of a vengeful God? A lesson to bring us up short? A mistake by a fallible creator? A necessary part of nature in the wrong place or out of control? Not really any of these in my opinion. But maybe, as we light the candle for the Patriarchs this week, we need neither to see them as technologically primitive or ourselves as technological masters of all we survey, but have respect for our time and place as we do for theirs, and wonder what future generation will make of our response and understanding of this plague. And as we recite our ancient Creed, do we both consider how we articulate afresh for this generation our tenets, and how we give thanks for all things around us, seen and unseen?

Next week; prophets and Jesus Christ.

God bless, Andrew

Prayers

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son, Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. Amen.

Our Lord says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Even so come Lord Jesus !

O Wisdom, Breath of the Most High, pervading and permeating all creation; come and make us friends of God. Come Lord Jesus !

O Lord of lords and Leader of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and gave him your law on Sinai, come and save us with your mighty arm. Come Lord Jesus !

O Root of Jesse, standing as a signal to the nations, before you all kings are silent, to you nations will give homage; come and save us, delay no longer.

Come Lord Jesus !

O Key of David, and ruler of the house of Israel, when you open no one can close, when you close no one can open; come and proclaim liberty to the captives and set free the oppressed. Come Lord Jesus !

O Rising Sun, Splendour of eternal light and Sun of justice, come and give light to those who live in darkness and the shadow of death. Come Lord Jesus!

O King of the nations, the Ruler they long for, the Cornerstone binding all together; come and save the people you fashioned from the dust of the earth. Come Lord Jesus !

O Emmanuel, our King and our Lawgiver, the anointed of the nations and their Saviour; come and save us, O Lord our God. Come Lord Jesus !

The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come!' Come Lord Jesus !

Lord you are the one who is to come. Come Lord Jesus !

Come, O Lord, do not delay; give new courage to your people who trust in your love. By your coming, raise us to the joy of your kingdom, where you live and reign with the Father and the Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

May the Lord, when he comes, find us watching and waiting.

Amen