Into his Courts with Praise...

south calder mission community

A Service of the Word

Sunday 1 November 2026
Fourth Sunday before Advent.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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INTRODUCTION

"Anyone who endures to the end will be saved."

Matthew 23:14.



THE CONFESSION

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all. Though we have grieved him, yet he will heal us if we confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Almighty God,
I confess that I have sinned against you
in thought, word and deed;
I have not loved you with all my heart;
I have not loved my neighbours as myself.
Have mercy upon me,
cleanse me from my sins,
and help me to overcome my faults,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Receive God's forgiveness

May the Father forgive us
By the death of His Son
And strengthen us
To live in the power of the Spirit
All our days. **Amen.**

PRAISE

O Lord, open my lips...
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
Give me the joy of your saving help...
and sustain me with your life-giving Spirit.

THE COLLECT

God of glory, touch our lips with the fire of your Spirit,
that we, with all creation, may rejoice to sing your praise;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Suggested hymn to sing or read ***Seek ye first the kingdom of God.***

THE WORD OF GOD.

Micah 3:5-end

Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets
  who lead my people astray,
who cry 'Peace'
  when they have something to eat,
but declare war against those
  who put nothing into their mouths.
Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision,
  and darkness to you, without revelation.
The sun shall go down upon the prophets,
  and the day shall be black over them;
the seers shall be disgraced,
  and the diviners put to shame;
they shall all cover their lips,
  for there is no answer from God.

But as for me, I am filled with power,
  with the spirit of the Lord,
  and with justice and might,
to declare to Jacob his transgression
  and to Israel his sin.

Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob
  and chiefs of the house of Israel,
who abhor justice
  and pervert all equity,
who build Zion with blood
  and Jerusalem with wrong!
Its rulers give judgement for a bribe,
  its priests teach for a price,
  its prophets give oracles for money;
yet they lean upon the Lord and say,
  'Surely the Lord is with us!
  No harm shall come upon us.'
Therefore because of you
  Zion shall be ploughed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
  and the mountain of the house a wooded height.

Psalm 43

1 Give judgement for me, O God,
    and defend my cause against an ungodly people; ♦
  deliver me from the deceitful and the wicked.
2 For you are the God of my refuge;
    why have you cast me from you, ♦
  and why go I so heavily, while the enemy oppresses me?
3 O send out your light and your truth, that they may lead me, ♦
  and bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling,
4 That I may go to the altar of God,
    to the God of my joy and gladness; ♦
  and on the lyre I will give thanks to you, O God my God.
5 Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul, ♦
  and why are you so disquieted within me?
6 O put your trust in God; ♦
  for I will yet give him thanks,
    who is the help of my countenance, and my God.

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13

You remember our labour and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was towards you believers. As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, urging and encouraging you and pleading that you should lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.

Suggested hymn to sing or read ***Now thank we all our God.***

GOSPEL
Matthew 24:1-14

As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. Then he asked them, 'You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' Jesus answered them, 'Beware that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, "I am the Messiah!" and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

'Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But anyone who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

REFLECTION – The end, or a new beginning?

The Temple in Jerusalem was one of the most solid, magnificent and impressive buildings in the city, in that part of the world. It was huge, the most significant building to the Jews. Every one hoped to worship there at some point in their lives. It was permanent, impregnable. A little history would be in order here.

This is not the temple of Solomon, that was destroyed by the Babylonians in around 587 BCE. The temple that Jesus knew was the temple of Herod or the Second Temple. Construction began under the Persian King Cyrus the Great and was completed during the reign of Darius I. It signified a period of renewed Jewish hope and religious revival.

Originally it was a relatively modest affair but it was extended and refurbished in the first century BCE under the reign of Herod the Great. So this was an ancient and important edifice. It was permanent.

Or was it?

The Second Temple was destroyed in 70 CE towards the end of the first Jewish-Roman war.

In the Gospel reading we see Jesus outside the temple. We know what he had been doing there from the previous chapter of Matthew's Gospel. He had been teaching, answering the criticism of the Pharisees and at the end of that chapter rendering them incapable of further questions. That was a turning point, an end of the constant attack by the religious authorities.

It was also the end of Jesus' temple ministry. After this he will never again enter it so another end. As he leaves his disciples pointed out the buildings of the temple. We can imagine the conversation;

"Look Jesus, isn't it magnificent? It is the biggest temple in all the world and it will last forever"

We can imagine Jesus stopping and turning to them and making what must have been, to them as devout Jews, a devastating statement;

'You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'

Jesus is making a profound comment that concerns the very basis of the identity of the Jewish nation. As a the nation it was founded upon its relationship with God, Yahweh. This magnificent temple was the symbol of their status as the Chosen Race. Jesus' words are not a comment on the fall of a building, rather they are words that cut to the very heart of how the nation of Israel should understand itself. The power and the privilege will crumble and be overthrown.

Matthew doesn't tell us what the disciples' immediate reaction was. I think it must have stunned them into a bemused silence, even Peter, so rarely at a loss for words. The story moves to the Mount of Olives where Jesus is sitting. Matthew doesn't name the disciples but the other Gospels mention Peter, James, John and Andrew. I think that's perfectly credible. These were more than "ordinary" disciples but part of Jesus' inner circle. Whoever they were the disciples ask him when this will happen. Note, the question "when?" and not "if". He has said it will happen and they believe him.

It seems that they are aware of what this falling of the temple means. It means the end of the age. Now, when there is an end it can lead to a new beginning. This will, the disciples assume, be the coming of Jesus again. Do they expect this to be soon, I wonder.

I doubt that they gained much comfort from the answers Jesus gave them. He first warns them that there will be false prophets and to beware of them;

'Beware that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, "I am the Messiah!" and they will lead many astray.'

Well, we can all think of cults and supposed preachers who turn the words of the Bible to their own uses. If we are not to be led from the path to the Kingdom we need to think carefully, read the scriptures for ourselves and use the words to help us keep in God's path.

It is easy to think of the "End Times" as a quick process. Much will happen and a great deal of it will be difficult and painful.

'And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.'

Looking at the things going on around the world we might be forgiven for thinking that this age we live in is the end time. Wars? Yes. Nation against nation? Yes. Famines? Yes, often as the result of the wars. Earthquakes and natural disasters? Yes, most certainly.

When we think about all that is going on in the world it is rather tempting to indulge in a sort of theological conspiracy theory, an argument, about when Jesus may or may not be returning. This is not the right approach.

We need to recognise that the tragedies of the world are the opportunity for us to work on God's behalf to transform a society that is unjust and oppresses people. To seek for equality, peace and justice in the community. As Christians we must show that our God, the one we believe in, is a God of justice, peace and love.

That may not be easy but we can gain comfort and strength from Jesus' words at the close of today's passage;

Anyone who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

The end is the start of something new. Just as the end of the Second Temple was the beginning of the Christian era we have the chance to be part of beginning a new Kingdom of God.

Creator God, give us the clarity of understanding and the courage of our belief in you to stand for justice, peace and love, in your name.

Amen.

Brian Pateman.

Suggested hymn to sing or read ***Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.***

THE CREED

All **I believe in God the Father,**
whose loving care is the pattern for family life.
I believe in Jesus, the Son of God,
who lives in my heart through faith,
and fills me with his love.
I believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens me with power from on high.
I believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.



THE PRAYERS

A time of quiet prayer for

- *The universal Church - Bishops, synods and all leaders church*
- *The leaders of the nations*
- *The natural world and the resources of the earth*

Loving God I see the news and I am afraid. Violence is spiralling out of control. I don't know what to think or feel. The temptation to fall into hatred, or despair feels very close at hand.
Help me to remember that nothing in all creation can separate me from your love that I know in Jesus. May your perfect love for me cast out my fear and free me to discern what is mine to do amidst the chaos of this suffering world.
Amen.

The Methodist Church.

Finishing with the South Calder Mission Community prayer...

Heavenly Father we thank you for the life of your Church in this place, and in all the villages of the South Calder Mission Community;
for all who have served and worshipped you in years gone by,
for all who make up your family in our churches today,
for the faith we have in common, and for the people and traditions which make each church unique.
By your Spirit, guide and equip us,
that together we might find new ways
to reach out to our local community,
to show your love to our neighbours,
and to encourage them
to follow the Lord Jesus in their lives.
Father, we offer ourselves to your service,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
And in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

and the Lord's prayer...

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 those who 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.

THE CONCLUSION

Suggested hymn to sing or read ***Brother, sister, let me serve you.***

The following prayer is said

Be with me, Lord, as I finish my prayer today.
May my lips always speak the truth;
may my eyes which have read your word
see only what is good;
and may my life as well as my worship
be always pleasing in your sight,
for the glory of your name. Amen.

And now may the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit,
strengthen us for the Christian life.
May the Lord who provides for all our needs
sustain us day by day.
May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care,
send us out to live and work for others.
And the blessing of God Almighty.
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always.
Amen.

So now may I go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Links for the hymns

Seek ye first the kingdom of God.

https://youtu.be/FFxZeY2D5tc

Now thank we all our God.

https://youtu.be/iLjJJBFlXR0

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.

https://youtu.be/XT0JvdAkTNU

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart.

https://youtu.be/x3jtkIzbApA