

Cooma Anglican 17 December 2023

Introduction

Advent Candle

Sustain us O Lord, with the power of your love, on our journey to meet the one who is coming: strengthen our weak hands, make firm our feeble knees, and open blind eyes to the dawning of your kingdom, so that by the light of your love and this candle our hearts may rejoice as we behold the majesty of our God We ask this through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Hymn - Let All The World

**Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King
The heavens are not too high, His praise may thither fly
The earth is not too low, His praises there may grow
Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King**

**Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King
The church with psalms must shout, No door can keep them out
But above all the heart, Must bear the longest part
Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King.**

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.
And also with you

The Great Commandment

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

Lord have mercy on us, and write your law on our hearts by your Holy Spirit

Sentence of the Day

My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour Luke 1:46-47

Prayer of Preparation

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.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you have made us and all things to serve you: come quickly to save us, so that wars and violence shall end and your children may live in peace, honouring one another with justice and love; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

¹ The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, ³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of

joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. ⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

⁸ “For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹ Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed.” ¹⁰ I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹ For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

Psalm: Luke 1:46-55

“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,

remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever,

just as he promised our ancestors.”

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

¹² Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³ Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²² reject every kind of evil.

²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

²⁵ Brothers and sisters, pray for us. ²⁶ Greet all God’s people with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

John 1:6-8, 19-28

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

¹⁹ Now this was John’s testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. ²⁰ He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Messiah.”

²¹ They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.”

²² Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

²³ John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

²⁴ Now the Pharisees who had been sent ²⁵ questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

²⁶ "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. ²⁷ He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

²⁸ This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Sermon - Mary's Song of Praise

Musical Item - The Magnificat

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 of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. 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.

Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response Christ Jesus, intercede for us and in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

The Lord's Prayer

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to 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. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Words of Comfort

Jesus said: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. John 13.34

Prayer of Approach [Let us pray.]

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies.

We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.

But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy.

Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy, welcoming sinners and inviting them to the Lord's table. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.

Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn - Let All Mortal Flesh

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly minded,
For with blessing in his hand
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
Our full homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary,
As of old on earth he stood,
Lord of Lords in human vesture,
In the body and the blood
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heavenly food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven
Spreads its vanguard on the way,
As the light of light descendeth
From the realms of endless day,
That the powers of hell may vanish
As the darkness clears away.

At his feet the six winged seraph;
Cherubim sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the presence,
As with ceaseless voice the cry,
"Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, Lord most high!"

Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom. **Blessed be God for ever.**

Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise. All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty Creator, everliving God. We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us. By his death on the cross, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin, and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

Merciful God, we thank you for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine, and we pray that by your Word and Holy Spirit, we who eat and drink them may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread; and when he had given you thanks he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

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

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded: proclaiming his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again, we celebrate, with this bread and this cup, his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

Renew us by your Holy Spirit, unite us in the body of your Son and bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father, in songs of never-ending praise:

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread: so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

The Presentation

The gifts of God for the people of God

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

The Lord's Supper is open to all who love the Lord. Grape juice is available. Please come to the Communion Rail if you are able observing appropriate social distancing.

Prayer After Communion

Gracious God, we thank you that in this sacrament you assure us of your goodness and love. Accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and help us to grow in love and obedience that we may serve you in the world and finally be brought to that table where all your saints feast with you for ever.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Notices

Hymn - Jesus Comes with all his grace

Jesus comes with all His grace, Comes to save a fallen race

Object of our glorious hope, Jesus comes to lift us up

**Let the living stones cry out, Let the sons of Abraham shout
Praise we all our lowly King, Give Him thanks rejoice and sing**

**He hath our salvation wrought, He our captive souls hath bought
He hath reconciled to God, He hath washed us in His blood**

**We are now His lawful right, Walk as children of the light
We shall soon obtain the grace, Pure in heart to see His face**

**We shall gain our calling's prize, After God we all shall rise
Filled with joy and love and peace, Perfected in holiness**

Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Dismissal

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

Sermon

A couple of thousand years ago two women got together for a chat. They were related, although we don't know how closely. One was probably just a teenager, and the other was, as the Bible translators politely put it, getting on in years. Neither had any children at that point, although the older one did have one on the way, and the younger one expected to get pregnant soon.

Both women were extremely devout, the elder being married to a priest, and could trace her family back to Aaron, the first priest God appointed in Israel. The other traced her line back to king David, the ancestor of all the subsequent kings of Israel.

I'm sure many of us can remember the first time someone told you that they were expecting, and you were probably struck by their excitement and their joy. Of course, I'm not being sexist, fathers are usually just as excited. I remember the leader of a bible study group that I was in at uni, but I hadn't seen for a few months. I knew his wife had some health challenges, but when I saw him, even across the room I could see that he was excited about something. When he saw me, he rushed over, and couldn't stop fidgeting while he politely waited to tell me his news. After many years of trying, he and his wife were expecting their first baby, and he could hardly wait to tell everyone.

I can only imagine what it was like for the two women to tell each other they are expecting at the same time, although given the number of babies born while I was at bible college, I imagine it happens a lot.

Anyway, I imagine it was very exciting for the two women I started talking about. If you haven't guessed, one was Elizabeth, married to Zechariah, soon to be mother of John the Baptist, and the other was Mary, betrothed to Joseph, soon to be mother of Jesus. Both had learnt from angels, and after the angel told Mary, she had rushed to tell Elizabeth. During their conversation, Matt sang the song we recited as our psalm this morning. It is often called the magnificat, the Latin word for glorifies in the first line. My soul glorifies the Lord.

Somehow, I think Mary and Elizabeth's conversation was a little different to most first time mum conversations today. Perhaps Luke just didn't record it, but there is no mention of cribs, baby clothes, the relative advantages of breast feeding or bottle, of cloth or disposable nappies, or any of the normal things new mothers talk about. As Luke was a man, maybe it didn't occur to him to record those things, but he did record this hymn of praise that Mary sang.

What I noted from this hymn, was that Mary praised God for 4 things.

Firstly Mary praises God for his generosity to herself, as unworthy as she saw herself.

She sang: ⁴⁸ For He (that is God) has been mindful of the humble state of his servant (that is Mary), and that from now on all generations will call me blessed.

She sings that ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

See how she praises God for the great things he has done for her - even though I suspect that she had very little idea of the long term details of what God was doing through her - she knew she was

having a baby, for the angel Gabriel had told her: Luke 1:31-33 (NIV) 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

If I were Mary this would have blown my mind - it was confusing enough that she was a virgin, her son would be king on the throne of David, but how on earth could her son reign over Jacob's descendant forever?

Mary then goes on to praise God for all those who fear Him, which she would have understood to be the Jews, and perhaps a few God-fearing gentiles of proselytes: She sang:

⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm.

She obviously was well versed in how God had blessed His people over the generations: from calling Abraham, to rescuing them from slavery in Egypt through Moses, the turbulent years of the judges, the prosperity when David and Solomon were kings, and the recovery from exile in Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. She would have known the mighty miracles that God had performed, the 10 plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the defeat of Jezebel's priests of Baal by Elijah, the miraculous turning back of the Assyrians from the gates of Jerusalem, and even the miraculous softening the hearts of Cyrus of Babylon to return the Israelites from Babylon. Yes, despite being a mere teenage girl, Mary knew her history well, and the mighty acts of her God's YAHWEH's arm.

Mary also praises God who also often acted in less miraculous ways, who lifted up his humble people Israel, filling their hungry with good things, helping them, being merciful ⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors." She praises the God who keeps his promises, unlike the fickle gods of the surrounding nations whom could never be certain their god's were still on their sides from one moment to the next, from one season to another.

In addition to this, Mary also praised God for the way he dealt with those who rejected him, the proud who thought they didn't need him, and tried to put themselves in his place, no matter how powerful they seemed to be.

She praised Yahweh who: scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts, who brought down rulers from their thrones, and sent away empty the rich who exploited the poor and the weak.

It probably seemed to Mary that Israel was humbled, if not downright humiliated throughout most of its history. Still, every now and then, God reminded them of his nature and faithfulness by bringing down the apparently powerful nations around them: The Egyptian Pharaoh, the Canaanites, the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Syrians, the Babylonians, and perhaps even one day, the Romans who even then held Israel in subjugation.

Little did Mary at this time understand that the baby she would give birth to, was God her Saviour, come to earth in human form. The name she was told to give the child Jesus, or 'God Saves' may have been a hint.

She also may not have known how her son would be the saviour of all the generations who fear him, who put their trust in him, not just Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or not. Knowing her history as she did, she may have expected this from the God who keep his promises to her ancestors, and particularly his promise to her ancestor Abraham in *Genesis 12:3 (NIV)* ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. " and God's promise to her ancestor King David, whom he promised *2 Samuel 7:12-14 (NIV)* I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son.

She would have known of these promises, and may have hoped that her son who have had a part to play in the fulfilment of these promises, but what she couldn't have known was the way her son would be THE fulfilment of these promises, THE blessing of the nations, the eternal King, God THE Son. Little did Mary know, as Paul was later to put it in *2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV)* ²⁰ For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ, Christ Jesus her Son.

She also wouldn't have known how her son was the fulfillment these promises. As the apostle Peter explained in *Acts 4: Acts 4:10-12 (NIV)* It is by his name, the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

Mary was not to know that some three decades later, she would be near the cross where he son was being crucified, and that on the third day, his tomb would be empty, having fulfilled all the promises made by her God Yahweh to Abraham, to David, and ultimately to all of Jesus's disciples and to us. The God, who has been mindful of our humble states, and through his Son, Jesus Christ, born of Mary, has done great things for us. Let us also, with Mary, rejoice in God our Saviour.

Let us now recite the mighty promises of our God through the words of the Nicene Creed.