



St Martin of Tours Chelsfield

*St Martin's worships and serves a loving God,
reaching out to the community in the name of Jesus Christ.*

Sunday 15 November 2020

THE SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT

With democracy, especially America's embarrassed version, under scrutiny; with separation from the European Union, Scottish independence and a 'now you see it now you don't' Irish border under awkward consideration; with millions displaced by tyranny and conflict; with casual racist language prompting the resignation of the Chair of the FA; with thousands of students trying to make the best of a bleak university experience, while schools struggle with shortness of time to recover deprived children's lost learning – you might be forgiven if you are feeling confused, depressed, helpless, hopeless or threatened and in many ways things do look pretty awful at present.

The little church in Thessalonica, faced a very similar situation as St Paul writes to them about the coming of the 'day of the Lord' – a time he describes as one of destruction for those who are not prepared for it. But St Paul reminds us that we are not dwelling in darkness, we are children of the light and are firmly encouraged to dwell in faith, love and hope.

One of the reasons given for imposing a second period of Covid lockdown was to enable us to 'save' Christmas. The news of the imminent arrival of a vaccine certainly cheered up the financial markets last week, and is a real source of hope that we are beginning to win the battle against the virus. The tabloid press are hoping that we might yet be able to 'rescue' the festive celebrations, even though the vaccine will not arrive in time for Christmas! The most pessimistic experts are still suggesting that Christmas might have to be cancelled!

Many in our nation sadly miss the point – it is not so much a case that the scientists, politicians, financiers and the retail world can 'save' or 'rescue' Christmas; but rather that Christmas can help to save and rescue them. For it is at Christmas that the 'Saviour of the world' is born as one of us, in a world equally troubled. Are we ready to receive Him – the approaching season of Advent gives us time to prepare – it is for us to choose whether we welcome Jesus into our lives or not. Christmas cannot be cancelled – it is coming to you on 25th December, as it always does!

Revd John

*You are invited to spend a quiet time with these prayers,
readings and reflection.*

Prayers for the week

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son was revealed to destroy the works of the devil and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life: grant that we, having this hope, may purify ourselves even as he is pure; that when he shall appear in power and great glory we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

[Collect for the Second Sunday before Advent]

Gracious Lord, in this holy sacrament you give substance to our hope: bring us at the last to that fullness of life for which we long; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

[Post Communion for the Second Sunday before Advent]

A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

A prayer for the nation

Loving Father God,
be with us in our distress;
be with our families, friends, and neighbours,
our country and our world.
Give health to the sick,
hope to the fearful,
and comfort to mourners.
Give wisdom to our frontline and key workers,
insight to our Government,
and patience to us all.
Overcome disease with the power of your new life,
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of London have called the Church of England to prayer for the nation throughout the month of November. Some of the prayers are printed above – for a prayer diary and more resources see:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/call-prayer-nation>

Today's psalm

Psalm 90:1-8,12

God's Eternity and Human Frailty

Lord, you have been our dwelling-place
in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

You turn us back to dust,
and say, 'Turn back, you mortals.'
For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night.

You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.

For we are consumed by your anger;
by your wrath we are overwhelmed.
You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

Today's readings

Zephaniah 1:7, 12-end

*The Coming Judgement on Judah
and the Great Day of the Lord*

⁷ Be silent before the Lord God!
For the day of the Lord is at hand;
the Lord has prepared a sacrifice,
he has consecrated his guests.

¹² At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
and I will punish the people
who rest complacently on their dregs,
those who say in their hearts,
'The Lord will not do good,
nor will he do harm.'

¹³ Their wealth shall be plundered,
and their houses laid waste.
Though they build houses,
they shall not inhabit them;
though they plant vineyards,
they shall not drink wine from them.

¹⁴ The great day of the Lord is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter,
the warrior cries aloud there.

¹⁵ That day will be a day of wrath,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
¹⁶ a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.

¹⁷ I will bring such distress upon people
that they shall walk like the blind;
because they have sinned against the Lord,
their blood shall be poured out like dust,
and their flesh like dung.
¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold
will be able to save them
on the day of the Lord's wrath;
in the fire of his passion
the whole earth shall be consumed;
for a full, a terrible end
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

The First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians 5:1-11

The Day of the Lord

¹ Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. ² For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴ But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷ for those who sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

The Gospel according to Matthew 25:14-30

The Parable of the Talents

¹⁴ 'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵ to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

¹⁶ The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷ In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸ But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." ²¹ His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." ²² And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." ²³ His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." ²⁴ Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." ²⁶ But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? ²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹ For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰ As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Scriptural Comfort

'Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand'

(Isaiah 41:10)

'Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'

(Philippians 4:6,7)

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.'

(John 3:16)

As we do not know how long this situation will last it is important that we look out for one another.

Please let Revd John know of anyone who is ill or in distress.

***Or if you need prayer or spiritual support,
or are lonely and just need a short chat please phone***

St Martin's is closed owing to further Covid-19 restrictions

Public worship is suspended until further notice

Please check the web site for updates

Worship from St Martin's will continue to be available online:

- A Sunday service on the web site
- Daily prayer on Facebook at 8.15am on Tuesdays and Thursdays

The church will be open for **private prayer** on Sundays from 10.00am until 11.00am and on Wednesdays from 9.30am until 10.30am.

Please note that this is a time for quiet personal prayer, it is not a service. If you come to pray you must follow the guidance posted by the door or follow the direction of the steward to observe the requirements of hygiene and social distancing. The reason for opening only twice weekly is to avoid the need for extra cleaning and leave space to arrange funeral services.

If you need to pray outside these times please let Revd John know and we will try to accommodate you. Please also let Revd John know of any urgent prayer requests or people in particular need.

Please note that to accommodate pastoral offices or with any changes to Diocesan or Government guidelines these arrangements are subject to change at any time.

For more information on St Martin's please visit our web site and Facebook page:

www.stmartinchelsfield.org.uk www.facebook.com/ChelsfieldStMartins

Other links and resources



Donate to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal:

<https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/ways-to-give/donate>

Daily HOPE is a national, free phoneline
from the Church of England on **0800 804 8044**.

The line is available 24 hours a day and offers music, prayers and reflections, as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone.

For today's online Sunday service from the Church of England visit:

www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online

Prayer for the nation:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/call-prayer-nation>

For other Church of England resources please visit:

www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-liturg-and-prayer-resources

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