



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2023 – THE SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT

COLLECT

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.

Psalm 90.1-12

- 1 Lord, you have been our refuge ♦
from one generation to another.
- 2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
or the earth and the world were formed, ♦
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- 3 You turn us back to dust and say: ♦
'Turn back, O children of earth.'
- 4 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday, ♦
which passes like a watch in the night.
- 5 You sweep them away like a dream; ♦
they fade away suddenly like the grass.
- 6 In the morning it is green and flourishes; ♦
in the evening it is dried up and withered.
- 7 For we consume away in your displeasure; ♦
we are afraid at your wrathful indignation.
- 8 You have set our misdeeds before you ♦
and our secret sins in the light of your countenance.
- 9 When you are angry, all our days are gone; ♦
our years come to an end like a sigh.
- 10 The days of our life are three score years and ten,
or if our strength endures, even four score; ♦
yet the sum of them is but labour and sorrow,
for they soon pass away and we are gone.
- 11 Who regards the power of your wrath ♦
and your indignation like those who fear you?
- 12 So teach us to number our days ♦
that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

A reading from St Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 5, verses 1 to 11

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 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! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. 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. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation (for Communion services only)

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia. I am the light of the world, says the Lord. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, chapter 25, verses 14-30.

Glory to you, O Lord

The Parable of the Talents

'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 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." 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." 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." 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." 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; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." 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? 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. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 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. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Hannah...

Treasure. What is your most precious thing? What do we hold dear? So often, it's the things we take for granted. Back in the lockdowns (when our Gospel reading last came up), as we endured the loss of so much, it may have felt like treasure had been snatched away. It was so easy to focus on what we didn't have, and to cling hard to what we had got left, rather than live courageously with it. A few years on and in the week after Remembrance Sunday, we once again discover that war and destruction are never far away; that we struggle to learn the lessons of the past. Then of course there is our changing climate and the impact of human activity. Month on month, we are beating records for global temperatures. Closer to home, the rivers are breaking their banks.

In these times the temptation is to bewail our lack of agency, our sense of helplessness. What is to be done?! Our enduring hope though resides not in loss, but in instead concentrating on what we can do- and to live in the fullness of whatever that may be. And, when we look at the world around us and can think of no meaningful response, we CAN pray.

In some ways, if we focus on what we can't do, we're like that worker who buried the money- our world shrinks, and we cling with such nervous tenacity onto the smallness of each day. In doing that, we tragically deny something of our own personhood, and also of God. The creative flow in today's story is that God gifts us in potential and then calls us to use it. Our creativity, our resourcefulness, our brave and sacrificial living is what brings hope, and what reflects the character of God.

We are creatures of infinite potential, whose life's pilgrimage is to grow into the image of the God who is love. So be encouraged to use whatever you've been given- to live generously with what we do have- to embrace the vulnerability that comes with that. In doing so, we are learning something of who we are- we discover that in ourselves, in each other, but ultimately in that divine mystery of love that is all in all. God.