

Morning Worship for Remembrance Day November 8th

Preparation

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength;
ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name.

The whole earth is full of his glory.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Opening Prayer

Holy God,

faithful and unchanging:

**enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,**

that we may truly worship you,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Cast your burden upon the Lord:

And he will sustain you.

Create in us clean hearts O God:

And renew a right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence:

And take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Give us the joy of your saving help:

And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.

Blessed be the Lord day by day:

The God of our salvation who bears our burdens.

We confess our sins.

God the Father forgives us in Christ

and heals us by the Holy Spirit.

Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness,

all slander and malice,

and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

(cf Ephesians 4.30,32)

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

Lord our God,

in our sin we have avoided your call.

**Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.**

Have mercy on us;

deliver us from judgement;

bind up our wounds and revive us;

in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God,

who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,

bring you his pardon and peace,

now and for ever. **Amen.**

Praise

O Lord, open our lips:

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the Lord:

All praise to his name.

Gloria in Excelsis

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,

almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks,

we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father:

receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,

you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The word of God

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians.

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

This is the word of the Lord: **Thanks be to God**

(1 Thessalonians 4:13–18)

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew:

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus spoke this parable to the disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, "Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the wise replied, "No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, "Lord, lord, open to us." But he replied, "Truly I tell you, I do not know you." Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord: **Praise to you, O Christ**

(Matthew 25:1–13)

A reflection by Revd Stephen Burge

As we now begin a second national lockdown, it struck me that the main thing that we are doing is *preparing* ourselves and our country for the weeks ahead. We are, and have been, preparing ourselves for the restrictions that we are going to have to go through again in our daily living,

we are preparing to forego meeting friends and family in person, and the government and all those thousands who are working in healthcare are *preparing* for the increased workload that they know is going to come. Often we have no idea about what is going to happen – certainly this time a year ago, we had no clue what was coming round the corner; but at other times we can have a sense of what is likely to happen and we can prepare for it. The preparations that healthcare professionals are making and the preparations that we are making go hand in: we are all working together and doing our bit to ensure that the very worst does not happen. By keeping to the lockdown rules that we have been asked to keep to, we are helping others, we are stopping the spread of the virus, and we are reducing its impact on those who become ill, as well as the impact on those who care for them.

The readings that we have had this morning seem quite appropriate amidst our preparations for another serious wave of the Covid-19 virus: the readings were also all about being prepared. This Sunday marks the beginning of what is known as "Kingdom Season" – a season when we think about the second coming of Jesus, the judgement of the living and the dead, and the ways in which we can further God's kingdom in the world today. The Parable that we heard, *The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids*, is about waiting and preparing.

Like a number of the parables that Jesus told before his arrest and crucifixion, the *Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids* is a difficult one to understand. Why do the five bridesmaids who are prepared refuse to share their oil? Why do they make the other five go and seek their own oil in the market, knowing that that would likely mean they would miss the arrival of the bridegroom? This really seems to jar with the central message that Jesus taught his followers; a message of love and compassion, of one caring for another and people helping all those in need. So why does Jesus change his message now? What does he really mean?

If we don't take the parable *too* literally – and it is often important not to read parables *too* literally - then the actions of the five bridesmaids can begin to make some sense. St Augustine, an early scholar of the Bible, interpreted the oil in the bridesmaids' lamps as symbol of their love and belief in God. Their lamps and their oil illustrate their deep relationship, commitment, and connection with God. This does, I think, help make things a little clearer. We cannot give our *faith* to people; we can show it and people can be the recipients of the product of our faith, but you can't actually give someone faith or belief. Faith in God, that is to believe in God

and to be living a life of love, is something that everyone has to search for and gain for themselves, which is why the five other bridesmaids had to go out and seek the oil of the faith.

But the message at the end of the parable, as well as in Paul's words in his *First Letter to the Thessalonians*, is that we do not know when Jesus will return, we do not know when the end will be: potentially, Jesus could return this afternoon, or it could be in a thousand millennia. Throughout his ministry Jesus sets up two important ideas that are woven into this short parable. The first is that we will be judged for what we do in our lives and held accountable for all the things that we do and say. The second is that we don't know when that moment of judgement will be: so, we need to be prepared for our own judgement and we need to be prepared *now*. The question Jesus asks in this parable is: Do you really want to put off *finding* God, *receiving* God's grace, and *embracing* the Christian life? What if, like the other bridesmaids, you are too late to be received by the Bridegroom? What if you miss out because you were too busy with other things? Isn't this too great a thing to put off and leave for another day?

It is also important to remember that having received our oil of faith, that is having decided to take up the Christian way of living, there is a need to act as well. Jesus often talked about light and that our faith should shine like an oil lamp in the dark: just as Jesus is the light of the world, we are lights too. In living out the Christian calling in all that we do and say, we are not only preparing ourselves for the coming of God's Kingdom, but we are also bringing God's Kingdom into existence in the here and now, however imperfectly that may be. Part of our calling as Christians is to help prepare the world for the return of Jesus, as Isaac Watts put it: "Joy to the World, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare him room and heaven and nature sing." The coming of the Kingdom is something that we should not fear, but rejoice in.

But, at the same time, the joy and blessings of Christ's coming can cause a great tension within us too: we can see the world around us and the pain and suffering that is abundant. Today is obviously not just the beginning of the Kingdom Season, but is also Remembrance Sunday, a day when we remember the horrors of war and the sacrifices that so many people have made in the past to help defend the weak and the oppressed. Preparing the God's Kingdom on earth can often mean preparing ourselves to act, to speak out and to actually *do* something; all too often we can sit idly by and hope that others will speak out against injustice. Those who fought in the two world wars left our villages to serve a greater cause helping in the fight

against fascism, tyranny, and oppression. Sadly, in our modern world war and oppression still exist, and we, as Christians, are called to do as much as we can to bring defend the oppressed and to bring about peace and reconciliation. Jesus' Kingdom is one where there is no suffering, no wars, no prejudice, no violence, no poverty, only peace; and that is what we should be striving to. As we remember the sacrifice of the fallen, we should seek to bring about peace in our world, so that that sacrifice never has to be made again.

Our readings this morning have made us think about the importance of preparing ourselves. Preparation is not simply about improving our relationship with God, but is also about looking at the world around us and seeking to do all that we can to bring about God's kingdom – whether that is looking after others by keeping to the lockdown rules, or speaking out against injustice, or fighting against tyranny. Then, and only then, will our oil lamps be full, and then, and only then, will our lamps burn brightly, as we wait for the coming of the Bridegroom, who will welcome us into that great and glorious Wedding Feast, where pain and suffering will be no more, only joy and peace. Amen.

Our faith

Let us declare our faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession led by Eileen Bennett

A prayer for Remembrance:

For all whom we remember this day, fulfil in them the purpose of your love, and bring us all, with them, to your eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen**

We pray today for Joy, Stephen, Gordon, Catherine, Angela and our PCC. Bless and guide Elizabeth, our queen and her family, for our bishops and all your Church in the service of Christ.

Lord, in remembrance: Hear our prayer

We pray for our village communities, for those who live in the High Street and Lord's Terrace and in our own community we pray for Churches Together in Eaton Bray, Edlesborough, Dagnall & Northall. In the wider world we pray for Writers, artists, musicians, broadcasters and journalists

Lord, in remembrance: Hear our prayer

We pray for wisdom for those in authority, for the staff of our NHS. For those in hospitals and care homes and for their families who cannot visit them, for those who no longer have employment and those too frightened to leave their homes.

Lord, in remembrance: Hear our prayer

Lord, we ask that you grant us all the strength to cope with whatever challenges we may face in the coming weeks, and we pray for the sick, the dying, the bereaved, the lonely, the abused, the poor, the desperate, the frightened and for those suffering from mental health issues.

Lord, in remembrance: Hear our prayer

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit, and for those whose names are in our thoughts and minds today.

In a moment of silence we bring to mind anyone we know to be in trouble and ask God to help us to reach out to them.

Lord, in remembrance: Hear our prayer

We remember those who have recently died, and for the family and friends of those whose year's mind falls at this time.

According to your promises, grant us, with them, a share in your eternal kingdom.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of The Blessed Virgin Mary, our patron saint, and all your saints, we commend ourselves and all Christian people to your unfailing love.

Merciful Father,

Accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

A prayer for the coronavirus pandemic

Keep us, good Lord,

under the shadow of your mercy

in this time of uncertainty and distress.

Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,

and lift up all who are brought low;

that we may rejoice in your comfort

knowing that nothing can separate us from your love

in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer that Jesus taught us.

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.

Conclusion

The Collect for the day

Almighty Father, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the king of all: govern the hearts and minds of those in authority, and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin, to be subject to his just and gentle rule; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power.

For you have created all things,
and by your will they have their being.

You are worthy, O Lamb, for you were slain,
and by your blood you ransomed us for God.

From every tribe and language and nation,
**you have made us to be a kingdom and priests
serving our God.**

To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
**be blessing and honour and glory and might
for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 4.11;5.9b,10,11)**

*We end with the words of the Grace, an ancient Christian prayer of
fellowship, remembering that although we are not together in person,
nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our
Lord.*

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the
fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.**

*Please let us know if you want us to pray for you either individually or if you
would like to be included on the Prayer Chain.*

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Reverend Joy Cousans; Reverend Stephen Burge

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