

HCI 2ND SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT- THE KINGDOM SEASON

15TH NOVEMBER 2020

INTRODUCTION

In today's New Testament reading, from his first letter to the Thessalonians, St Paul speaks of the prophetic return of the Christ. That is when the 'day of the Lord' that will replace the day of Man. Paul has no foretelling of when this day will be, so he can only implore the community, and us, to 'keep awake'. Our first hymn is chosen with this in mind.

Paul also knows that there is no putting off the day once the Lord has decided. What does this phrase the 'Day of the Lord' mean to you? Does its inevitability and its consequences raise hopes or anxieties?

But first, as you hear the reading from Zephaniah, be conscious of the mental picture it creates and then hear Paul's words and make any connections that you can, looking for ways to make ready for God to play a bigger part in your life to make every day a 'Day of the Lord'.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is recorded as having said to the Pharisees: *'The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.'*

The Thessalonians took the 'Good News' to heart and so Paul was able to say to them 'you are not in darkness...you are children of the light and of the day'.

It is a great reassurance to hear – 'you are blessed'. When we feel overwhelmed: Do we let ourselves hear the confidence that the Lord has in us? Do we ask for the strength to stay awake for the Lord – to remain attentive to him? Do we ask for the strength to respond where we are needed and using the gifts God has given us. Jesus teaches about how we are uniquely resourced by God to bring the Kingdom into our world.

In a quiet moment. Let us all ask God for the opportunity to show ourselves each as a child of light and one who uses his or her gifts for God's purposes, bearing in mind that the kingdom of God is among you and perhaps even within you!

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

The Prayer Book instructs us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', although we may be unable receive the sacrament physically in ourselves at this time. For as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament; (for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood; then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us;) From the Third Exhortation in the Book of Common Prayer. Making a Spiritual Communion is especially fitting when we cannot receive the sacrament at the great feasts of the Church, and it fulfils the duty of receiving Holy Communion 'regularly, and especially at the festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whit Sunday.' (Canon B 15 of the Church of England).

OPENING HYMN Awake, Awake Fling off the Night!

- 1 Awake, awake: fling off the night!
For God has sent a glorious light;
And we who live in Christ's new day
Must works of darkness put away.
- 2 Let in the light; all sin expose
To Christ, whose life no darkness knows.
Before the cross expectant kneel;
That Christ may judge, and judging heal.
- 3 Awake, and rise up from the dead,
And Christ his light on you will shed.
Its pow'r will wrong desires destroy,
And your whole nature fill with joy.
- 4 Then sing for joy, and use each day;
Give thanks for ev'rything alway.
Lift up your hearts; with one accord
Praise God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Meter: 77 77.

Awake Awake Fling off the Night

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DEUS TUORUM MILITUM

Anonymous

from the Grenoble Antiphoner (1753).

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THE COLLECT

The president introduces a period of silent prayer with the words

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 OUR TIMES

Dear Lord

anoint us with the Holy Spirit,
as we share in Christ's suffering and victory
that we may bear witness to the gospel of salvation;
through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Zephaniah 1.7,12-18

- ⁷Be 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.
- ¹²At 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.'
- ¹³Their 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.
- ¹⁴The 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.
- ¹⁵That 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,
¹⁶a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.
- ¹⁷I 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.
- ¹⁸Neither 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.

SECOND READING

1 Thessalonians 5.1-11

- ¹Concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³When 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! ⁴But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵for you are all

children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But 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. ⁹For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

At the end the reader may say

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

GRADUAL HYMN Amazing Grace

- 1 Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.
- 2 T'was grace that taught my heart to fear.
And grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.
- 3 Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far
and grace will lead me home.
- 4 The Lord has promised good to me.
His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.
- 5 Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.
- 6 When we've been here ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.

Meter: CM.

Amazing Grace

Traditional American tune

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 25.14-30

Jesus said to his disciples, ¹⁴The kingdom of heaven is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then 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." ²¹His 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."

²²And 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." ²³His 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."

²⁴Then 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; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." ²⁶But 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? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For 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. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

SERMON

Work for the Lord: God has given each of us "tools" to use in His kingdom.

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.

Matthew 25:29 (NRSV)

Jesus once told a story called the Parable of the Talents. In Jesus' story, a man was going away on a trip so he called his servants together and gave each some of his money to use while he was gone. I hope Jesus will not mind if I tell you a story that I call, *The Parable of the Three Tool Boxes*, inspired by his teaching.

Once upon a time, many, many years ago there was a man called Mr McSugar, who had a building business. Mr McSugar had to go away on a long business trip to the north of England and so he called his three employees together and said, "I have to go on a long trip and so I am leaving you three in charge. I have put together a tool box for each of you to use to keep the business going while I am gone." Mr McSugar then gave each of his employees a tool box.

The tool boxes contained all the tools the employees needed to do what the man expected of them, but since the three employees didn't all have the same skill-set or trade, each toolbox was different.

To the first employee, Adam, he gave a very large tool box filled with every tool that you can imagine. To the second employee, Bert, he gave a smaller toolbox, but one that still had a very good assortment of tools. To the third employee, Charlie, he gave a very small tool box with just a few tools, but enough tools for the employee to do what was expected of him. Mr McSugar then left to go on his trip.

When he returned, as Lord McSugar he called Adam, Bert and Charlie together to see what they had done while he had been gone.

Adam said, "I know that you had a great love for the homeless people of the world, so I used the toolbox that you gave me to build homes for the homeless". "That is great!" said Lord McSugar. "You have done so well that I am going to put you in charge of all new building work for my entire new bigger company."

Bert said, "I know that you had a great love for the elderly, so I used the toolbox you gave me to fix up the homes of elderly people who can no longer do the work themselves". "That is wonderful!" said Lord McSugar. "You have done such a good job, that I am putting you in charge of all the repair and maintenance work for the entire new company."

Then Lord McSugar turned to Charlie and asked, "What did you do with the tools that I left for you?" "I know that you are a very demanding boss and that you expect a lot from your employees. I was afraid that if I used the tools you gave me that one of them might get broken or that I might lose one of them and make you angry. I put the tools in the secure tool-store. They were there all the time you were gone. Look, here they are, just like new."

Lord McSugar went red as a beetroot and pointed his finger, and shouted "What a worthless employee you are! I didn't give you the tools for storing up, I gave them to you to use in my business. You are fired!"

Since they had proven that they would make good use of them, Lord McSugar took Charlie's toolbox and divided the tools between Adam and Bert.

This story illustrates what God has done in us. He has given each of us tools to use in building His kingdom. We don't all have the same tools, but God expects us to use whatever tools He has given to us.

If we do, He will give us even more, but if we don't, He may take them away

What did Jesus say? 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. Matthew 25:29 (NRSV)

Amen.

OFFERTORY HYMN Angel Voices ever singing

- 1 Angel voices, ever singing, round Thy throne of light,
Angel harps, forever ringing, rest not day or night;
Thousands only live to bless Thee, and confess Thee Lord of might.
- 2 Thou Who art beyond the farthest mortal eye can scan,
Can it be that Thou regardest songs of sinful man?
Can we feel that Thou art near us and wilt hear us? Yea, we can.
- 3 Yea, we know Thy love rejoices o'er each work of Thine;
Thou didst ears and hands and voices for Thy praise combine;
Craftsman's art and music's measure for Thy pleasure didst design.
- 4 Here, great God, today we offer of Thine own to Thee;
And for Thine acceptance proffer, all unworthily,
Hearts and minds, and hands and voices, in our choicest melody.
- 5 Honour, glory, might and merit, Thine shall ever be,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, blessed Trinity;
Of the best that Thou hast given Earth and Heaven render Thee.

Meter: 85 85 84 3.

Angel Voices Ever Singing

Francis Pott (1832 – 1909)

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ANGEL VOICES

Edwin George Monk (1819 – 1900)

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POST-COMMUNION HYMN Forth in thy Name, O Lord, I go

- 1 Forth in thy Name, O Lord, I go,
my daily labour to pursue;
thee, only thee, resolved to know
in all I think or speak or do.
- 2 The task thy wisdom hath assigned,
O let me cheerfully fulfil;
in all my works thy presence find,
and prove thy good and perfect will.
- 3 Thee may I set at my right hand,
whose eyes mine inmost substance see,
and labour on at thy command,
and offer all my works to thee.
- 4 Give me to bear thy easy yoke,
and every moment watch and pray,
and still to things eternal look,
and hasten to thy glorious day.
- 5 For thee delightfully employ
whate'er thy bounteous grace hath given;
and run my course with even joy,
and closely walk with thee to heav'n.

Meter: LM

Forth in thy Name, O Lord, I go

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788).

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ANGELS' SONG

Orlando Gibbons (1583 – 1625)

Descant arranged by Richard M.S. Irwin.

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PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Silence is kept.

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.

The Post Communion Prayer is followed by:

All **Almighty God,**
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN Take my life and let it be

1. Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
2. Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee;
Take my voice and let me sing,
Always, only for my King.
3. Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee;
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.
4. Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise;
Take my intellect and use
Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.
5. Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.
6. Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

Meter: 77 77

Take my life and let it be

Francis Ridley Havergal (1836 – 1879)

NOTTINGHAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)

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Opening Voluntary

NARENZA

from Johannes Leisentritt's "Catholicum Hymnologium Germanicum" 1584.

The arranger is William Henry Havergal (1793 – 1870).

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Amazing Grace

Traditional American tune

Arrangement © 2013 Richard M.S. Irwin

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Angel Voices Ever Singing

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Forth in thy Name, O Lord, I go

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ANGELS' SONG

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Take my life and let it be

Francis Ridley Havergal (1836 – 1879)

NOTTINGHAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)

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Closing Voluntary

CANNONS

Georg Friderich Händel (1695 – 1759)

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Mass Setting

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