

Traditional Home service Sunday 6th December Advent 2

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed are you, Sovereign God of all, to you be praise and glory for ever. In your tender compassion the dawn from on high is breaking upon us to dispel the lingering shadows of night. As we look for your coming among us this day, open our eyes to behold your presence and strengthen our hands to do your will, that the world may rejoice and give you praise.
Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent. Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen**

cf Psalm 51

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*Ding, Dong*)

READINGS - Is 40:1-11
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

TALK

CREED

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

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*When Love Was Born*)

CONCLUSION

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

Ding dong merrily on high

In heaven the bells are ringing:
Ding dong! verily the sky
Is riven with angel singing
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so here below, below
Let steeple bells be swung
And "Io, io, io!"
By priest and people singing
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Pray you, dutifully prime
Your matin chyme, ye ringers;
May you beautifully rime
Your evetime song, ye singers
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Peterborough Cathedral Choir
Recorded live at Peterborough
Cathedral, Autumn 2020

Director of Music: Tansy Castledine
Organist: Christopher Strange
Recording technicians: Chris Pallister
of Service-AV, and Eugene Chan

www.peterborough-cathedral.org.uk

When Love Was Born

Starlight shines, the night is still
Shepherds watch from a hill
I close my eyes, see the night
When love was born

Perfect child gently waits
A mother bends to kiss God's face
I close my eyes, see the night
When love was born

Angels fill the midnight sky, they sing
Hallelujah, He is Christ our King

Emmanuel, Prince of peace
Loves come down for you and me
Heaven's gift, the holy spark
To let the way inside our hearts

Bethlehem, through your small door
Came the hope we've waited for
The world was changed forevermore
When love was born

I close my eyes, see the night
When love was born

Sermon for 6th December 2020
Adrian Morton, Advent 2:
2 Peter 3:8-15a Living in the Big picture...

I want us to reflect on this 2 Peter passage this morning.

To put the passage into some context first.

Many of the early Christians had an increasing expectation that the end times would happen in their life time.

The end times being an event whereby Jesus will come in glory, His kingdom will be fully established with a new heaven and a new earth.

And those who belong to Him will be vindicated and will inherit His kingdom in its fullness.

You see this expectation in other NT letters.

It's a common expectation even amongst Christians today.

John Arnott at Rivercamp a few years ago was really talking about how he thought this age was coming to an end soon.

I remember when the Chernobyl nuclear disaster happened in 1986 some Christians saw that as a sign of the end times.

Maybe some have thought of Covid in that way? Not sure.

Anyway, what was being addressed in our passage is that some false teachers viewed the apparent delay as the Lord being 'slow to anger' and interpreting it as lateness.

And it seems that these false teachers, because of this apparent lateness, were encouraging some early Christians to embrace sin and a morally deficient lifestyle.

And so Peter was addressing that.

He's saying It's not a question of lateness.

God's view of time is not like ours.

He's outside of time, a thousand years to Him is like one day.

That in itself is a good reminder to us if we have been waiting on a promise of God.

Or we have been waiting for some fulfilment of a word given to us.

God's view of time isn't like ours.

He's outside time, which is hard to get our head round.

But Peter was saying look its not about lateness, this is about God's patience.

The very reason the end times haven't happened is that He is wanting all people to come to repentance and not perish.

But also don't be lulled into this idea that it won't happen.

Because when it does it will be dramatic.

It will be an awesome, even terrifying occasion.

"the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire."

To be honest I think I'd rather it didn't happen in my life time.

I'm not sure I want to be around when it happens.

I think I'd rather be with Jesus in my mansion, or room, or toilet block.. what ever I get assigned...!

What can we do with passages like this?

Well, I think there are at least two things:

Firstly, It's a reminder that there is a bigger picture.

We are part of a bigger story.

Which is the story of God working out His salvation plan across the earth.

The big picture is that the world we live in is morally corrupt.

Under the influence of the enemy.

And Jesus came to destroy His work, which He did on the cross.

And then to have a people so in love with Him, so empowered by Him, that our lives would be channels whereby He continues to bring His kingdom to rule upon the earth.

As Kris Khandiah says in that video we watched, Christmas is about rescue...

Jesus came on a rescue mission.

I don't know about you but I find it easy just to focus down on my immediate concerns in life.

And it's not that the detail of our life is unimportant.

Our jobs, our health & well being, how our children are developing and hopefully flourishing.

All these things are hugely important.

I've said before, if it matters to you it matters to your heavenly Father.

And Life is to be lived to the full.

BUT it is also good to be reminded, particularly during Advent!, that our lives are lived in the context of God's big salvation story.

And that should be encouraging, because no matter what hardship we might be facing.

No matter how much uncertainty or confusion there is.

No matter even, whether we are facing death.

God is on His throne.

He is still working out His purposes.

Our world is heading in one direction.

Whereby the Father, in Jesus, will establish a new heaven and a new earth.

That those who belong to Him will inherit that.

And what was lived in this life will be in comparison a poor substitute compared to what's to come.

<For years, I've been receiving pension statements. And for years I've tended to ignore them.

A few weeks ago, during this second lockdown, I received the latest and I'll confess something to you.

One day, I took out all my statements, put them all in date order and started to try and understand them.

Apparently you can take out a lump sum now...

Is that enough for a better motorbike, Lord...?

But I started to think through what retirement might look like.

Do we want to sail round the world - no, don't like water!

Do we want to travel the world on a motorbike, it'd mess Louise hair up?

Do we want to sit in our conservatory and garden everyday?

Probably none of those things.

Because, whilst I will retire from being a vicar, I don't want to ever retire from being about God's business.

I want to keep in God's bigger story, and have influence in that story.

I want to see others come to salvation.

If we believe this Peter passage, the Lord is being patient because He wants all people not to perish.

This is a serious story...

I'm still doing too many funerals whereby people think their loved one is going off to meet all their other lost loved ones in this lovely place called heaven.

Just because they have been 'Good' people.

It doesn't work that way.

Jesus dies to get people into eternity. It cost him...

So I want to be part of that story until I die.

So firstly, the passage, and others like it reminds us we are part of a bigger drama being played out.

The canvas of our lives is larger.

And whatever other metaphor you can think of.

You get the gist....

What else can we do with passages like this...

Well, **Secondly**, Believing that Jesus will come again.

That God will usher in a new age.

A new heaven and a new earth...

It should motivate us to live well in the present.

And this was Peter's point in this passage.

It says:

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

If the new age isn't being ushered in according to our short-term expectations, it doesn't mean we can live how we like.

In a morally dysfunctional way if you like.

It should motivate us to live well.

Why would we want to align our lives with something that isn't going to last in other words.

With something that will be destroyed and condemned.

Rather, it makes more sense to align ourselves with righteousness.

I love that phrase in v13:

"We wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home."

I know righteousness is complex in meaning.

But simply, we have a righteousness from God.

Given to us because of our faith in Jesus.

So if we align our lives with righteousness.

In other words our behaviour is consistent with who we are (the righteousness ones), then the new age will be like going home.

Where that word has the very best understanding of what home means.

A place of comfort, safety, rest and refreshment.

A place where we are ourselves.

Where there is no pretence or falsehood.

So let's align our lives with righteousness because that is where we are heading.

We are going home.

We align our lives with righteousness by living a life of repentance.

Which is a great Advent word.

It just means to 'change our thinking'.

To turn away from what we know is wrong and turn towards the one who gives life.

Repentance is the precursor to becoming a Christian.

But it's also a habitual way of living for the Christian.

Repentance is a great blessing.

It may not seem like it at first because it attacks our pride.

That part of us that screams, "but I'm not that bad." Or "I don't really do much wrong." "God won't mind that bit of my life being wrong."

But it is a blessing, because it brings freedom.

The freedom that forgiveness brings.

The freedom that comes from having peace with God.

So when we think about the end times, we can stand in confidence and say to God "You have examined my life" and I have received your forgiveness and salvation.

Welcome me Home...

Amen.