

15th November 2020 6pm and Self Controlled? Use your Talents

Service led by Anthony Manning, Sermon by Anthony Manning

Bible readings by Hanne Manning and Gill Heath. Prayers by Gill Heath

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Greeting

[Anthony:] Hello, good evening. Welcome everybody to this service of evening prayer from St. John's Church in Kenilworth. My name is Anthony, and I'll be leading the service. And then here's Hanne.

[Hanne:] Hello

[Anthony:] and Gill.

[Gill:] Hello.

[Anthony:] And they also will be taking part as you'll see later.

Preparation

So, I hope you know the words roughly from Evening Prayer, but if not, it is available on the church's website. So, here's how we start.

The light and peace of Jesus Christ be with you

All **and also with you.**

The glory of the Lord has risen upon us.

All **Let us rejoice and sing God's praise for ever.**

We have come together in the name of Christ
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,
to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Confession

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All **Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned**

in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.

Absolution

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Opening prayer

The day is almost over, and the evening has come;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

Our Archbishops have asked us this month to pray for our country every evening.
So we'll use these words¹:

Loving God,
at this time of crisis
when so many are suffering,
we pray for our nation and our world.
Give our leaders wisdom,
our Health Service strength,
our people hope.
Lead us through these parched and difficult days
to the fresh springs of joy and comfort
that we find in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your Spirit come down upon us
to set us free to sing your praise
for ever and ever.

All **Amen.**

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

Now, we are going soon to have two readings from the Bible read by Hanne and Gill. But first let's all sing together. Our first hymn is *To God be the Glory*.

Hymn: To God be the Glory

1. To God be the glory! great things He has done!
So loved He the world that He gave us his Son;
who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain:

Praise the Lord! praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord! praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son:
and give Him the glory! Great things He has done!

2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood!
To every believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Refrain

3. Great things He has taught us, great things He has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer and higher and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see!

Refrain

1st Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

1 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, **2** for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **3** While people are saying, 'Peace and safety', destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

5 You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. **6** So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. **7** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. **8** But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. **9** For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. **10** He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

2nd Reading: Matthew 25: 14-30 [NIVUK 1984]

The parable of the talents

14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

19 “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’

21 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

22 “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’

23 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

24 “Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

26 “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

28 ““Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29 For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

[Anthony:]

Let's pray.

Father God, please help us to be alert and self-controlled, reaching out for you in these bewildering times. Amen.

So, what can we make from these words of Jesus about talents? Hmm. Basically, he's saying, "Use whatever talents God has given you." Yes. Don't feel that your contribution is too small to be worth doing something. So look around in these bewildering times, don't hide away. Think about other people's situations. What do you notice? Do whatever God leads you to do to help. And before that, Hanne was reading from Paul's first letter to the church he planted a year before in

Thessaloniki. New Christians there felt they were in bewildering times. So Paul tells them, "You are all children of the light."

Are you children of the light? I don't know all of you out there. So do think, have you responded to Jesus? Have you accepted His love, His sacrifice to bring us back to God's love? If not, that's important to explore. If yes, then indeed, you are children of the light. As Paul says a little later, Jesus Christ died for us, so that we may live together with Him. So, as children of the light, Paul says, be alert and self-controlled, not asleep and drifting.

What being alert and not closed in on yourself means in practice will vary a lot from one person to another, and from one time to another. While you have to stay at home so much, it may just be noticing the people walking past your house, praying for them. Or yesterday, it was 80 years since the bombing of Coventry that destroyed the cathedral and so much more of the city centre. Next Saturday, it will be 80 years since the bomb that fell near Kenilworth clock, killing refugees from Coventry. Can that help us remember people in similar dangers today? In this month of lockdown, our Archbishops have asked us to pray for our country each day. So let's try to do that. Let's be open to other people, their skills and experiences, the pressures on them. For example, someone will be reluctant to contact others that they know when they can't think of anything positive to tell. I'm very pleased that St. John's is one of the churches behind the Foodbank, which is there to help people who may be struggling in Leamington, Warwick or Kenilworth. This year there are many other groups trying to help people who are struggling in various ways. This month, the Church of England has launched a project called *Living in Love and Faith*². As perspectives on gender, identity, and sexuality are involving in our society, this project wants Christians to explore together how relationships, marriage and sexuality fit within the bigger picture of a humanity that is liberated by Jesus Christ, and infused by the Spirit, to reflect the image of God in which we are all created. So, if you have a friend for whom these issues are important, please stay by them if you can.

Whatever situations and issues we focus on, Paul tells us to be alert. Put on faith and love for protection. Your faith in God and the love for other people that he's developing in you will keep you strong to reach out for Him. So it comes back to where we started with talents. Use whatever talents God has given you. Don't be ashamed if they feel rather small. Just follow where God leads you to use them. Be alert to his guidance.

Amen.

Hymn: The Church's One Foundation

And now let's sing again together. Our hymn is *The Church's One Foundation*.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. The church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the Word:
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy Bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died. | 2. Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food.
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued. |
|---|--|

2 <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>

3. Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, 'How long?'
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.

4. 'Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore;
Till, with the vision glorious,
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great church victorious
Shall be the church at rest.

5. Yet she on earth hath union
With those whose rest is won,
And mystic sweet communion
With God the Three in One.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with thee!

Creed

So now let us use the Apostles' Creed to tell God how we believe in him.

All **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.**

Intercessions

So now we come to a time of prayer. I'll hand over to Gill.

[Gill:] Loving Heavenly Father, we come before You as a group rejoicing that we can say this is the day You have made. And thank You so much that we are children of the light and of the day, for the daylight You give us to see

our way, possibly through difficulties as well as happy times. We hope that our behaviour warrants Your expectation. We are confidently expressing that You have revealed Yourself to us through the Bible, and most clearly through the gift of Your Son Jesus Christ, and the close personal experience that the Holy Spirit brings us. We acknowledge our trust in You as a true and saving Lord.

We bring before You now Your Church, especially all the churches in Kenilworth, and for their hard-working and determined clergy, whether employed or retired, lay persons and readers, our young people's leaders, the office staff and all those working hard to spread the Good News. And we also say a huge thank-you to those well ahead with technology who make it possible for us all to meet together in this way to continue our fellowship.

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

We think about Your creation, acknowledging that more recently, we've messed things up. And think about climate change and the way it will impact on the world's poorest communities. Thank You for those people who nudge at our consciences and make us think twice about our use of plastics, and avoid buying products with excess packaging. Let's consider how we could benefit from walking or cycling if and where possible, or growing our own veg. Maybe these could be some of our talents. And these small considerations can make a difference.

We pray, trusting in You for Your protection over our town. And maybe on our walks during lockdown, we could do a bit of litter picking to help keep Kenilworth look beautiful, and think of it as our service to You and to the community. Thanks to those who work hard for eco-church, all these things make us think. In the beginning, when You created the world, You looked at it and saw that it was good. Maybe we could try to keep it that way. We ask Your blessing on future international conferences dealing with such things.

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

We bring before You all those people working in the public sector for our benefit, those employed by local authorities, the NHS, those working in care homes, the police, those taking meals to the hungry, the active COVID-19 group in our town, and all those that You know about and I've forgotten, and ask that You cover all of these groups with Your love and safety. We pray for our young people in schools and universities and for their teachers and lecturers at this time. We praise and thank You for all the different scientists working on vaccines to free us from the dangers of COVID-19. And thank You that it would appear there's a light on the horizon with an effective vaccine to be rolled out. These people have worked so tirelessly for our benefit. How do we say thank-you? Is the real way out of this pandemic when we put aside all unnecessary worldly things, and fall down on our knees acknowledging You as our Saviour?

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

We consciously bring before You our government, acknowledging the difficulties they've had to face in more recent times. We would ask, whatever our political leanings, that You continue to help them make good decisions and to work positively with each other, for the common good in all things. Lord, You are ever watchful and bless us with Your gifts, and provide us for all our needs. So help us to build only on what pleases You.

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

We think about those many countries who are in armed conflict, and those under tyrannical leadership right now, those persecuted for their faith, and pray for the safety of innocent civilians, and the effects on families, especially children made homeless, those in refugee camps, those fleeing unspeakable conditions in their own lands and seeking new homes and safer places. These people must be desperate to take their families from war-torn situations, to they know not where. How fortunate are we here in Britain? Let's continue to be tolerant of others.

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

We offer prayers for those who are suffering in any way, those known to us and those only known to You. We think about those friends and relations that have been examples to us during our lives, and thank You for them. We prayed especially last week for those families grieving for those military personnel that had been lost to them through wars, both in the distant and more recent past. Let's not forget them and pray a blessing on them.

We thank You for our Queen and for the example she had been in her serving and in her faithfulness to You. And we pray for her continued good health, so that she will be able to enjoy the future bank holidays that are planned for her next Jubilee.

We pray for ourselves during this latest lockdown, that we enjoy as much time as we can by thinking positively, being outside when possible, meeting up with people on a one-to-one basis, talking to our friends by phone, WhatsApp, FaceTime, whatever, and thinking about others before ourselves.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for all the benefits that You have won for us, for all the pains and insults that You have borne for us.

Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, may we know You more clearly, love You more dearly, and follow You more nearly, day by day. Amen. ³

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Collect for the day (2nd Sunday before Advent)

[Anthony:]

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.

The Lord's Prayer

Now, gathering all our prayers and praises into one, as our Saviour taught us, so we pray.

All **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.**

Blessing / Grace

Let's ask God's blessing on each other in the words of the grace.

All **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.**

Hymn: Immortal, Invisible God only Wise

So thank you all for joining in this service of Evening Prayer from St. John's Church in Kenilworth. Our final hymn, let's sing together, is *Immortal, Invisible God only Wise*.

1. Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.
2. Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.
3. To all life Thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish, but nought changeth Thee.
4. Great Father of Glory, pure Father of Light
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render, O help us to see:
'Tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee.
5. Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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