

Morning Praise @ Home 5th November 2023

Opening prayer

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Confession Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

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*

Absolution May the Father of all mercies cleanse *us* from *our* sins, and restore *us* in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Bible Reading

Matthew 24:1 – 14

Reflection

Enduring Faith in Troubled Times

Introduction:

I've never been pregnant but I know a lot of people who have!

When a young couple went to the doctor to be sure that they were going to have a baby they were congratulated, then the early months were explained – morning sickness, the importance of a healthy diet, changes as the little life inside developed and then of course the birth. Not too much detail please.

Anyway, birth-pangs are one of the ways that the prophets spoke of God's intention to bring a new world – a new future to birth. In the end it would be glorious but there could be some rather painful episodes on the way.

The Gospel of Matthew provides us with a wealth of wisdom and insights into the teachings of Jesus. In Matthew 24:1-14, Jesus speaks about the signs of the end times - the period leading up to the beautiful arrival of God's future. Jesus offers guidance on how his followers can navigate through the challenges – the birth pangs that lie ahead. This passage not only provides a glimpse into the future but also holds valuable lessons for us in the present.

God's future is more than a beautiful temple:

In Matthew 24:1-14, Jesus and his disciples are in Jerusalem, marvelling at the grandeur of the temple. Sensing their awe, Jesus foretells the temple and its destruction, as well as the signs that would precede his second coming. He warns his disciples about the rise of false messiahs, wars, famines, earthquakes, and persecution, which would test their faith.

Lessons for us today:

1. Awareness and Discernment:

Just as Jesus urged his disciples to be watchful and discerning, we too must be aware of the signs and times in which we live. While we should not be consumed by fear or speculation, we should pay attention to the world around us. It is not at all attractive sometimes. The news is evidence of that.

2. Endurance and Perseverance:

Jesus assured his disciples that they would face tribulations and persecution, but they were to endure and persevere. This message resonates with us today, as we encounter various trials and challenges. The ability to endure and persevere through difficult times is a testament to the strength of our faith. It is in these moments that our character is shaped and our faith deepened. But only if we face it with God's help.

3. Trusting in God's Providence:

Jesus reminds his disciples that even in the midst of chaos and uncertainty, God remains sovereign. He assures them that not a hair on their heads will perish without God's knowledge. This timeless truth reminds us to trust in God's providence, even when the world seems chaotic and unpredictable. Our faith is not in the circumstances surrounding us but in the unwavering faithfulness of our Heavenly Father.

4. Spreading the Gospel:

In the midst of tribulations, Jesus instructs his disciples to continue proclaiming the Good News to all nations. This command remains relevant today. We are called to share the hope and love of Christ with others, even in the face of opposition. Our faithfulness to this calling can bring light and hope to a world that is desperate for the message of salvation.

5. The Endurance of Faith:

Jesus assures his disciples that those who endure until the end will be saved (v13). This statement emphasizes the importance of steadfast faith throughout our journey of life. The challenges we face are not meant to discourage us but to refine and strengthen our faith. It is through enduring faith that we will experience the ultimate victory and salvation promised by Jesus.

Conclusion:

As we reflect on Matthew 24:1-14, we are reminded of the enduring relevance of Jesus' teachings. While the events around us may sometimes range from troubling to traumatic they are not the end of the story. By being watchful, enduring, trusting in God's providence, spreading the Gospel, and maintaining an enduring faith, we can navigate through the troubled times of our lives. May we find solace in these teachings and be encouraged to live out our faith with unwavering devotion, regardless of the circumstances we face.

Affirmation of faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.

This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Prayers of intercession

Dear Lord

We pray for the ongoing crisis and violence in The Middle East.

We pray for those affected by the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October. We remember the families of those killed, we ask for healing for the injured, both physically and mentally. We remember those kidnapped and taken away into Gaza.

We pray for all those affected by Israel's subsequent offensive in Gaza. For the families divided, loved ones lost. For those forced to flee their homes despite the danger across the country. For the desperate situation as supplies of fuel, food, water and medicine have all but stopped. We pray for the aid organisations struggling to help refugees and the injured.

Father we bring all the parties involved to you in prayer and ask for a just settlement of this long-running dispute, that Jew and Palestinian might one day live side by side in peace.

Asking for such a thing might seem absurd today, but we look back at examples of how warring and divided nations have over time become friends, how divided nations have become united. We think of post-war Germany, of South Africa, of Northern Ireland. We ask for peace in the Middle East Lord, we ask for justice.

We pray for the divisions in our own society that the conflict in the Middle East has exposed. We pray for the British Jewish community who feel threatened, we pray for British supporters of the Palestinians who feel ignored.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those involved in the conflict in Ukraine. For the young men and women of Ukraine fighting to defend their homeland. For the raw recruits drafted into the Russian army and thrown into the front lines. Again Lord we ask for justice and eventual peace.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

This week the UK has hosted a summit at Bletchley Park on the issues around the increasing use of artificial intelligence. Lord, we pray that our leaders are touched by you as they exercise their discernment over all the issues involved. The opportunities AI might bring but also the many threats. Lord there are so many threats to our world; nuclear proliferation, global warming, abuse of AI, wars and conflicts – it's such a mess Lord. All these things are man-made - Forgive us for our lack of stewardship. Forgive us for our neglect and greed.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Closer to home, we pray for those affected by the ongoing cost of living crisis. Touch us all to ask how we can help locally and give our leaders the wisdom to share our resources in a just way.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for any we know who are sick. We pray for those recently bereaved. We pray for those suffering loneliness.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our community and the role of our church within it. Father we know that over the years the church has become less of a focus for village life; we ask for your help and guidance to re-establish its presence here. Help us to live lives focused on you, so that we might better serve you and the people of this parish and beyond.

Help this church Lord as we plan ahead for the services and events around Christmas. We ask that you touch the lives of all those who attend our services and the village events at this time.

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

The Lord's Prayer As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

Closing prayer

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**