

TELEPHONE SERVICE 17th January 2021

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Welcome, all of you, wherever you are, to our service on this 2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Jesus said I am the light of the world, he who believes in me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life

The peace of the Lord be with you. **And also with you**

CONFESSION

As we come into God's presence, we confess our faults and failings

Lord Jesus you wept over the sins of your city.

On our 'city' Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy**

Lord Jesus you heal the wounds of sin and division, jealousy and bitterness.

On us, Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy**

Lord Jesus, you bring pardon and peace to the sinner. Grant us peace

Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy**

ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God, who sent his Son into the world to save sinners, bring us pardon and peace, now and forever. **Amen**

THE COLLECT *(special prayer for today)*

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new; transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace; and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

NEW TESTAMENT READINGS Revelation 5:1-10

1. And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.
2. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"
3. And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.
4. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.
5. But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."
6. And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.
7. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.
8. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.
9. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
10. And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

GOSPEL READING John 1:43-end

43. The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."

44. Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

45. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

46. And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

47. Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

48. Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

49. Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

50. Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these."

51. And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

REFLECTION

Epiphany is a Greek word that literally means 'shining a light on' something

Epiphany is a time of revelation - and today we are looking at the last book of the Bible which is called Revelation.

Last month on the phone I spoke about 'secrets' (what Paul called 'mysteries') hidden things which God shows us, to share.

God's revelations are a bit like a Russian doll.

You pick one and think, this is it! But this wooden doll is packed with mystery. When you open it you find another doll inside, and when you open that up you find yet another

Last month we saw that God's *mystery planned from the foundation of the world* was about the coming of Jesus for the first time as the child of the manger - the One identifying with us in our weaknesses and providing for our needs.

During this season of Epiphany we consider further revelations that flow from this one

The Book of Revelation is an exciting book describing how the apostle John was progressively shown seven seals leading to seven trumpets, and then seven bowls. Vision upon vision, inside, and from, the previous ones (like a Russian doll). God, for John, and us, is switching on the lights showing what is to come - that is; Christ's second coming in glory. The book of Revelation is so very relevant to our situation today describing plagues and power struggles, financial collapses and environmental catastrophes, and increasing clashes of evil against good. Yet, like on a stormy day - every so often the sun bursts through the gloom - so, with all the difficulties, we get declarations of faith and songs of praise, culminating in the wonders of Heaven and the presence of Jesus.

In today's reading the apostle John (in a vision) was shown a scroll that contained God's purposes for the future. But it was shut tight and sealed up. In frustration John says: *I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.*

No one could see what God had planned

Then one of the elders in Heaven said: *Don't cry, look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to open the scroll.*

After the Christmas revelation of Jesus being the Babe or the shoot or *stem of David*, John is pointed to *the Lion*.

The King of the 'jungle' of the competing, confusing, and corrupting 'power struggles' of earth, is called The Lion.

Through him comes order, purpose, and authority

So John turns to see this Lion in all its magnificence, *and (he says) in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain.* The Lion is the Lamb .

With God, greatness is not found in strength or supremacy, but in servanthood and sacrifice.

The King *on the throne* wears not a gem-encrusted crown of gold but of bloodstained thorns.

What a revelation, what an epiphany!

God *is* great in glory, majesty, and power, but is also great in grace, compassion, care, and in loving sacrifice for us.

In v8, as he looked, John was blown away when he saw the inhabitants of heaven *having harps, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints*. All those who had trusted the Lamb, *were singing a new song, and saying: "You are worthy for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made us kings and priests to our God*. And that's where the book of Revelation ends, with hope - hope in heaven with God, and a grand climax of praise

ch22:3 says: *the throne of God and the Lamb will be in it, and his servants seeing his face, will worship him*.

Let us do that with this **song** -

1. O worship the King all glorious above; O gratefully sing his power and his love;
Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days, pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.
2. O tell of his might, O sing of his grace, whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;
His chariots of wrath the deep thunder-clouds form and dark is his path on the wings of the storm
3. O measureless might, ineffable love, while angels delight to sing thee above
Thy humbler creation, though feeble their lays with true adoration shall sing to thy praise

DECLARATION

Let us declare our faith in God, saying

We believe in God the Father, who created all things; **for by his will they were created and have their being.**

We believe in God the Son, **for with his blood he purchased us for God, from every tribe and language, from every people and nation.**

We believe in God the Holy Spirit. **The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'. Even so come, Lord Jesus.**

Amen

And so, in the presence of Christ, we pray

We rejoice that Jesus is the Stem of David's root; and as 'man' he knows all about our humanity, our weaknesses struggles, and pains

We pray for all those who are afflicted in body, mind, or spirit, especially those struggling with the pressures that Covid brings to our hearts, homes and society. We pray for all those who care for the sick and troubled. be they NHS staff, Carers, or Teachers.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We rejoice that Jesus is the Lion of Judah. There is no thing and no one greater than you. You are the overcomer. So, when things seem impossible we thank you for Gabriel's revelation to Mary that 'All things are possible with God'.

We pray for those who feel defeated by life, oppressed by evil, and fearful of death

Assist those who run Helplines, those who give godly counsel, for the police , and especially those who pray for the needy

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We rejoice that Jesus is the Lamb - the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

We pray for those who need forgiveness - to receive it and to give it. For those burdened by failures of the past and with guilty consciences in the present.

Help your church to fearlessly proclaim the cross, and the good news that through Christ our sins are buried in the depths of the sea, and that he has grace for every situation.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We rejoice that Jesus is the coming King. That there is a day coming when men will beat their swords into ploughshares, when justice will flow down like rivers and righteousness will be given to the poor and oppressed.

May the leaders of the nations acknowledge that you are God, and that righteousness exalts a nation

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We rejoice in you Jesus, and for the hope that we have that we will see you, be like you, and live for ever

with you in the glory that we call heaven, and we pray for the day when the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We gather all our prayers together 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**

Finally we pray God's blessing of peace on each other

The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; may he turn his face towards us, and give us peace. Amen

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us and remain with us, and those whom we love and pray for this day and for evermore. **Amen**

Song: The splendour of the King: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTU_BU_J_YO

The splendour of the King, clothed in majesty, Let all the Earth rejoice, All the Earth rejoice
He wraps himself in light, and darkness tries to hide, And trembles at His voice, Trembles at His voice
How great is our God, sing with me, How great is our God, and all will see, How great, how great is our God
Age to age He stands, And time is in His hands, Beginning and the End
The Godhead Three in One, Father Spirit Son, The Lion and the Lamb, The Lion and the Lamb
How great is our God, sing with me, How great is our God, and all will see, How great, how great is our God
Name above all names, Worthy of our praise, My heart will sing, How great is our God
How great is our God, sing with me, How great is our God, and all will see, How great, how great is our God
How great is our God, sing with me, How great is our God, and all will see, How great, how great is our God

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