

# Parish of Central Exeter

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday before Advent 14<sup>th</sup> November 2021

## Love is at the heart of all things

Welcome everyone.

### Introduction

During this week the COP 26 Conference will have come to a close: we hope with a positive outcome. Thursday the 11<sup>th</sup> November was Armistice Day, so this Sunday is also Remembrance Sunday. There will be a short act of Remembrance within today's service.

The readings being used today are:

Micah 4: 1-5 (swords into ploughshares)

John 12: 9-17 (love each other as I have loved you.)

Today's reflections on these texts and hymn choice are by Sheila, and intercessions have been provided by Jess with acknowledgements to the Anglican Chaplaincy of Costa Blanca. Many thanks to you both.

### Call to Worship

We gather together  
in the name of the One who bids us come.

We gather together  
to hear the words of the One who is Love.

We gather together  
to sing praises of the One who teaches peace.  
Come, let us worship!

*(The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada - Peace in Community.)*

### Opening prayer

We ask, O God, for the grace  
to be our best selves.  
We ask for the vision  
to be builders of the human community  
rather than its destroyers.  
We ask for the humility as a people  
to understand the fears and hopes of other peoples.



We ask for the love it takes  
to bequeath to the children of the world to come  
more than the failures of our own making.  
We ask for the heart it takes  
to care for all people  
as well as for ourselves.

For You, O God, have been merciful to us.  
For You, O God, have been patient with us.  
For You, O God, have been gracious to us.

And so may we be merciful  
and patient  
and gracious  
and trusting  
with these others whom you also love.

This we ask through Jesus,  
the one without vengeance in his heart.  
Amen

*(written by Sister Joan Chittister, Benedictine Sister of Erie. Posted on World Prayers.)*

## **Gathering Hymn**

'God is love, His the care', sung here by Ridgeway Community Church, which is in Redditch, Worcs. Words are on the screen.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xbKiO\\_wFQ8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xbKiO_wFQ8)

## **Prayers of Penitence**

O God of peace,  
Forgive us when we only have good intentions  
and do not commit ourselves to concrete action for peace and justice.  
Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

O God of justice,  
Forgive us when we allow your image in us to be marred  
as we remain passive in face of so much violence and exclusion.  
Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

O God of life,  
you have placed us on this earth to tend and watch over it.  
Forgive us when we have failed to care for your world,  
to protect nature, the home you have given us,  
the home of our ancestors and of our descendants.  
Help us to promote life and seek peace.  
Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.  
Amen.

*(from Prayer for Peace, adapted from materials from the World Council of Churches.)*

### **Words of Assurance**

Hear then the good news  
that in and through Jesus Christ we are forgiven.  
Thanks be to God!

### **A short act of Remembrance**

We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow  
those whose lives  
have been given and taken away  
in world wars and conflicts past and present.

We pray for all  
who in bereavement, disability and pain  
continue to suffer the consequences of  
fighting and terror.

### **You may wish to keep a time of silence**

#### **Collect**

God, our refuge and strength,  
bring near the day when wars shall cease  
and poverty and pain shall end,  
that earth may know the peace of heaven  
through Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen.**



## Old Testament Reading

### Micah 4: 1-5

#### The Mountain of the Lord

<sup>4</sup> In the last days  
the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established  
as the highest of the mountains;  
it will be exalted above the hills,  
and peoples will stream to it.

<sup>2</sup> Many nations will come and say,

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the temple of the God of Jacob.

He will teach us his ways,  
so that we may walk in his paths."

The law will go out from Zion,  
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> He will judge between many peoples  
and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.

They will beat their swords into ploughshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,  
nor will they train for war anymore.

<sup>4</sup> Everyone will sit under their own vine  
and under their own fig tree,  
and no one will make them afraid,  
for the Lord Almighty has spoken.

<sup>5</sup> All the nations may walk  
in the name of their gods,  
but we will walk in the name of the Lord  
our God for ever and ever.



*Edward Hicks (American, 1780–1849), Peaceable Kingdom, 1834. Oil on canvas, 29.6 × 35.5 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.*

## **Gospel**

### **John 12: 9-17**

<sup>9</sup>“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup>My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup>I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup>This is my command: Love each other.

## Reflection

*'To avert climate disaster; we need resilient societies built on love, not just technology.'* This is the headline for an article by Gaia Vince in the Guardian Weekly which caught my attention and I want to begin by quoting her conclusion.

*Love is itself an evolved human survival adaptation. It is what enables us to cooperate with strangers and create the social networks on which we all depend. Dealing with the climate emergency requires a strong society. Social resilience involves creating stronger communities that care for one another in times of disaster. But this is no substitute for responsible governance. Climate challenge demands a strong, responsive societal adaptation, which needs leadership and vision to build. As humanity faces its biggest challenge, we need to adapt our societies by retrieving the love for one another that is the very basis of our humanity.*

Obviously, I would disagree with her opening statement in that I believe that love comes from our loving creator God. Yet I can agree with the rest especially her final words about 'retrieving the love for one another that is the very basis of our humanity.'

The readings I have chosen for today are ones suggested for the theme 'peace of the world'. The gospel extract shows John's interpretation of Jesus' words about love with the challenge to 'love one another' in the way that Jesus loved us. This could mean 'laying down one's life for one's friends' which has often been linked to those who die in wars. Yet we saw in the first few months of the current covid 19 pandemic how health and care workers lost their lives along with others providing vital services for society. Though this is now less likely to happen in Britain with the continuing unequal distribution of vaccines across the world it is still occurring in other countries.

The covid pandemic along with the effects of the changes in the global climate highlight the inequalities in the world. These have always been present but in recent decades have increased. The prophets Isaiah and Micah in Judah with Amos and Hosea in the northern kingdom of Israel in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE spoke out against the injustice and corruption of their societies. Along with the words of judgement they gave words of hope and the picture in today's passage from Micah 4 (compare Isaiah 2:1-4) does that. It shows nations coming together, laying down weapons in order to provide food, seeking peace and taking away fear. It may be idealistic, but it is visionary and encouraging.

Later in Micah 6:8 the prophet shows what God wants from his people – not expensive sacrifices and elaborate ritual in worship but 'to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.' With the huge issues facing humanity this century it can seem overwhelming. Yet this has always been the case. We can only begin where we are with the resources and knowledge we have been given. Having just reread my reflection from a year ago the message is the same to do what we can to show God's justice and loving mercy in our daily lives and our decisions.

## Hymn

Sheila found this hymn, which is appropriate for Remembrance Sunday, in Worship Live. It can be sung to the tune of Finlandia. I cannot find any screen version of the hymn, but you can hear the tune being played on the organ of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Morwell, Victoria, Australia. The words are below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3t3kU2CM8bk>

How many years?

1. How many years have humans trod this earth?  
How many tribes and nations came to birth?  
How many conquering armies left the field,  
only to fight again, perhaps to yield?  
How many empires soared to dazzling heights,  
decaying, fell, and passed from human sight?
2. So through the wasted hopes of countless years,  
through all the web of hatred fed on fears,  
in every age we hear the anguished cry:  
"Why must we fight, why must our people die?  
Why does our species, flawed humanity,  
destroy itself with such insanity?"
3. Our Lord knew well the fatal sin of pride,  
the sin through which so many millions died.  
He firmly shunned the lure of earthly power,  
which Satan offered on the temple's tower;  
and yielded up his life to shameful death,  
yet saved and conquered with his final breath.
4. Let every Christian walk in Jesus' path:  
tell out the news that love has conquered wrath;  
resist the lies that foster hate and strife;  
preach words of calm when foolish fears are rife;  
proclaim to all the world that war must cease,  
so every land may taste the fruits of peace.

Stephen Linstead © sqlrml@btinternet.com  
Worship Live Issue 62, Winter 2015

## Act of Commitment

We commit ourselves  
to responsible living  
and faithful service.

We commit ourselves  
To strive for all that makes for peace

We commit ourselves  
To seek to heal the wounds of war.

We commit ourselves  
To work for a just future for all humanity.

### **Intercessions**

Let us pray.

Almighty Father, we thank you for bringing us together this Remembrance Sunday to recall with tenderness and respect those who gave their lives in the wars of the last century and this. We pray for those still caught up in conflicts across the world – too many to name. As we pray for peace, give us peace in our hearts.

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

O God of truth and justice, we hold before you those men and women who died in active service throughout the world. As we honour their courage and cherish their memory, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and forever.

*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Almighty God, be with those who mourn, who feel numb and crushed and are filled with the pain of grief, whose strength has given up. Be with those we know who mourn, be also with those we know who are ill, in hospital or in care homes, and let us give thanks for those who are on to road to recovery. We think particularly at this time of Daphne.

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

We think at this time of the ending of the COP26 conference. We pray for all those who have been taking part, high or low, and for the leaders of those countries who would not get involved. We hope that whatever positive decisions are made, that they may stick.

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

Heavenly Father, you have taught us, through your servant St Francis, that all creation is your handiwork. Grant us your grace that we may all exercise wise stewardship of this fragile Earth; that we may tread lightly upon it and cherish its resources, so that our children and our children's children may enjoy its riches throughout the generations and your name be glorified in all you have made.

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

Creator of our common home, you fill the earth and sea and sky with life. Forgive us our neglect of your creation, the choking waste of our pollution, the damage done by careless habits and the greed of individuals and nations and our indifference to future generations. Help us to amend our lives, help governments and those with power and influence to refuse to further damage your work. Help us to lift our voices for lasting change and to live well and gently on the earth to the glory of your Son, the Living Word through whom you made this fragile world.

O come, O come Light of the World and shine into the darkness; bring hope to the hopeless and make clear a path of justice.

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

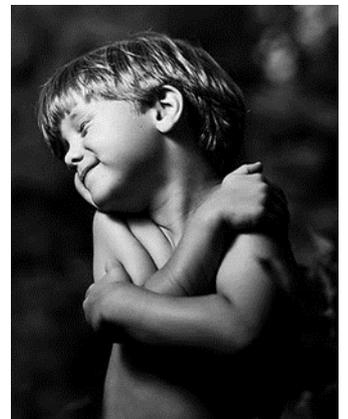
Amen.

### **The Peace**

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

### **A short Spiritual Communion**

The Book of Common Prayer reminds 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', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.



Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.

O God,  
help me to trust you,  
help me to know that you are with me,  
help me to believe that nothing  
can separate me from your love  
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **An offertory prayer**

*We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.*

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,

as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.

We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,

for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,

and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

*Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment.*

*As we prepare for communion you might like to listen to Nigel's version of a prayer of St. Bede, sung by the choir from St David's.*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNVIVroW2sc&list=PLgBLixTy9an7geXqCsL903tgRBAAd7GYHF&index=3>

*Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say*

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,

for all the benefits you have given me,

for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.

Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,

I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,

may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,

and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

### **Post Communion Collect**

God of peace, whose Son Jesus Christ proclaimed the kingdom and restored the broken to wholeness of life: look with compassion on the anguish of the world, and by your healing power make whole both people and nations; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Closing Hymn**

'Christ be our Light'. This is a slightly different version from Holland sung (in English!) by Petra Berger. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvzKjVO8sHA>

**Commission**

Let us go with Jesus, the light who guides us on our way.  
May our hope be that the Sun of Justice will rise one morning  
on all humankind.

May the God of Peace, our constant companion,  
lead us along paths of solidarity and hope,  
and give us the joy of being united in God's love.  
Amen.

*(from Glory to God and Peace on Earth, published by the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, 2011.)*

**Blessing**

Reconciling Christ, bless us and bless all who engage  
in the sacred work of envisioning new wholeness,  
and bringing people and nations together. Amen.

