

worship notes

from the United Reformed Church



Sunday 8th November
Proper 27 | Ordinary 32
Remembrance
The Revd Peter Clark

Call to Worship

No one knows when the Son of Man will come – Jesus says it will be at a time we least expect. He told a story to encourage his followers to be ready, prepared, realistic and wise so that we may not be fooled or taken by surprise. Now is the time to wake from sleep. Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. So be careful how you live. Don't be foolish. Be wise, and make the most of every opportunity. Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. Wisdom shines with an unfading light, those who love wisdom, will see her, those who seek wisdom will find her. Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. What I say to you, I say to all: Keep awake! Amen

Prayers of Adoration and Approach

At the beginning of another week,
with many distractions and demands on our attention,
we wait in quietness:

thinking of those whose lives are hard,
who long for justice, for help, and for your salvation,
we wait in hope:

thinking of those who live only for themselves
and forget the needs of others,
we wait with impatience:

thirsty for wisdom, hungry for righteousness,
glad to be gathered with your people,
we wait with joyful expectation:
we wait for you, O God. Amen.

Prayers of Confession & Assurance of Pardon

Wisdom begins with respect for the Lord,
and understanding begins with knowing the Holy One.

God our Father,
we betray our lack of respect for you in our carelessness,
our thoughtlessness, our selfishness.
We stand before you in sorrow

[Silence]

Lord Jesus Christ,
you call us to follow,
but we are unready and ill-prepared,
we forget our calling and lose our way.
We stand before you in expectation
and wait for your forgiveness.

[Silence]

Give us understanding and turn our hearts towards you.

Holy Spirit of God,
you bring wisdom and understanding
to the hearts and minds of those who seek you.
We stand before you in hope and wait for your forgiveness.

[Silence]

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
To all who turn to him he says:
'Your sins are forgiven.'
He also says: 'Follow me.'
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Act of Remembrance

Now, before we start the main service, I am conscious that this is the nearest Sunday to Remembrance Sunday, when we remember the awful costs paid by those in the army, navy, and air force in past wars, not to mention the huge suffering that wars have inflicted on civilians, too. We are hugely conscious that wars and conflicts continue this day still and as we hold two minutes of silence, let us pray to God that humanity will indeed convert swords to ploughshares and the world will live, finally, to live in peace.

Two Minute Silence

The Legion Exhortation

They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old;
age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
we will remember them.

Lawrence Binyon

The Kohima Epitaph

When you go home tell them of us and say -
for your tomorrow we gave our today.

Readings

Amos 5:18-24 | St Matthew 25:1-13

All Age Activity

Ask people if they have ever attended a wedding? Was it a family member or a friend?

Consider the symbolism that is used in modern weddings - 'father-figure' walking the bride in, bridesmaids accompanying bride, declarations of freedom under the law to be legally married, facing each other as the couple make their vows, exchange of rings, presiding minister holding their hands together during a prayer.

Then consider perhaps symbols that are less common these days - a big white dress, morning dress, marriage held in a church, father of the bride 'giving away' his daughter?

How about symbols that are evidence of a change in society in more recent years - same-sex weddings, mutual changes of surnames, children of one or both of the couple being present at the ceremony?

Conclude that the symbolism within the marriage ceremony has changed significantly in modern times and has probably changed many times in other ages. Consider that in our Gospel story, Jesus used what was then familiar parts of a wedding ceremony to demonstrate a parable...and wonder perhaps what part of a modern, current service might he pick on today?

Sermon Notes

Amos 5:18-24 - Amos was an outsider from the southern kingdom of Judah called to prophecy in the northern kingdom of Israel/Samaria after the separation of the two. It was a time when the threat from the then superpower, Assyria was beginning to become evident. Amos' message was essentially that the religious rituals in the north were simply false piety and all-show, symbolising worship of God, but shown to be false by the rank injustice and corruption that he suggested was widespread across the nation. His message was one of the Lord being aware of the falsehood of these practices and reminding true followers that they should understand that God is a God of justice and righteousness. His call to turn back properly to God's ways, if rejected, would mean ultimately, that the Kingdom would fall as evidence of the Lord's judgement. St In an era of people using Christian language and symbolism in the political arena in the West in a context of othering immigrants and other faiths, there is an opportunity of using this reading to question if there are parallels with 8th Century Israel? Reference to Martin Luther-King's use of verse 24 in the Civil Rights campaigns of the 60s might be irresistible.

St Matthew 25:1-13 - the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids has rich picking for the preacher, using a story that had much familiar symbolism for the original audience. Jesus used his tale to effectively test the feelings of the crowd hearing it. Who did they identify with (who do we)? Did they agree with the logic that unpreparedness meant exclusion, and do we get the message to prepare properly? In a link with the Amos text, the preacher might remind the congregation that how we live our lives needs to reflect Jesus' teaching of grace, salvation, and justice and perhaps not just looking after our own personal 'supplies of oil'? At a time when Jesus' ministry was beginning to meet significant resistance, it is worth noting that his message was about responding appropriately and living the way he was advocating and being awake to the challenges and the world in which his audience lived. It might be worth, if having previously looked at more recent symbols in modern weddings, perhaps wondering which might be one that could be used to symbolise being prepared and staying awake?

Prayer of Dedication of Offerings

Loving God, we bring these our gifts in thanksgiving
for all that you have given us –
asking that we may be servants of others
and witnesses to your love.
In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

Prayers of Intercession

**Blessed are you, Lord our God,
Master of the universe,
who gave the heart understanding
to distinguish between day and night.**

We pray today for the Church of God,
sharing our regret that you called us to be one
and yet we have often disagreed, conflicted and insisted
that our way of being your Church is the only one!
We give thanks that we work so much better together ecumenically
and we pray for those involved in Churches Together and interfaith working.

SILENCE

Keep us attentive and alert;
ready to make the most of every opportunity to grow in faith,
to share the hope we find in you
and to witness to your love in acts of kindness and hospitality.

**Blessed are you, Lord our God,
Master of the universe,
who gave the heart understanding
to distinguish between day and night.**

We pray for the wonder of God's creation
and share our regret that we have mistreated it
and caused global problems.
We pray for initiatives to make the world more sustainable.
We also pray for places across the globe
where injustice, oppression and war make life intolerable,
unsafe and miserable.
We pray for tolerance, fairness and peace.

SILENCE

Give us wisdom to seek you,
and courage to work for the coming of your kingdom,
when justice will roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Blessed are you, Lord our God,

**Master of the universe,
who gave the heart understanding
to distinguish between day and night.**

We pray this day for our national governments and also,
closer to us the communities we each live in,
praying for local elected and community leaders
as they seek to make the places we call home
safe, efficient and supportive.

SILENCE

May we encourage one another with life-giving words of hope,
and put into action the words that reflect our readiness to serve you,
and one another, in love.

**Blessed are you, Lord our God,
Master of the universe,
who gave the heart understanding
to distinguish between day and night.**

We pray for those in need.

SILENCE

Lord, we know that you rejoice with those who celebrate
and also share the grief of those
who are sorrowing, homeless, hungry or in need of support.

We pray for those working as volunteers for foodbanks,
debt counselling in Citizens Advice or other voluntary organisations.
Make us attentive to the needs of those around us,
and attentive to your word of life.
At this time of Remembrance,
we pray for those who have lost loved ones in wars
and for peace for those who died in conflict

**Blessed are you, Lord our God,
Master of the universe,
who gave the heart understanding
to distinguish between day and night.**

We pray as we look forward in hope.

SILENCE

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died,
especially those known to us,
those remembering the anniversary of a loved one,
those both facing illness and death
and those caring for them and sharing the pain.
Teach us to number our days
and give us patience to wait with your creation,
in eager expectation for the glory that will be revealed.

**Blessed are you, Lord our God,
Master of the universe,
who gave the heart understanding
to distinguish between day and night.**

**We bring our prayers together
in the name and presence of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Blessing

Lead us, Lord from death to life, from falsehood to truth.
Lead us, Lord from despair to hope, from fear to trust.
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace.
Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.
And the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be upon us and remain with us always.

Hymn Suggestions				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory	3		33	
Let us spread the pollen of peace throughout the world			633	
Come with me, come wander (Sing hey for the carpenter)			462	
Seek ye first the kingdom of God	512	641	254	590
Jesus Christ is waiting		360	251	
For the healing of the nations	620	706	696	
O Lord The Clouds Are Gathering / Have Mercy Lord		708		509
Judge Eternal Throned in Splendour	626	264		395
Peace is flowing like a river				554
For Everyone Born A Place At the Table		685		
Give me oil in my lamp				167
O The Life Of The World Is A Joy and A Treasure		141	114	
Make me a channel of your peace	629	528	707	456
Put peace into each other's hands	635	659	712	

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*