

Morning Prayer 27<sup>th</sup> December 2020

The First Sunday of Christmas

Service with Iris Gertschar



Personal preparation before the service begins.  
Please take time to remember where you are,  
and why you are here.  
Give thanks and become still  
in the presence of God

Prelude: ACF 95 Of the Father's love begotten  
(organ prelude and carol)

1. Of the Father's love begotten  
ere the worlds began to be,  
he is Alpha and Omega,  
he the source, the ending he,  
of the things that are, that have been,  
and that future years shall see  
evermore and evermore.

3. O ye heights of heav'n, adore him;  
angel hosts his praises sing,  
all dominions bow before him  
and extol our God and King;  
let no tongue on earth be silent,  
ev'ry voice together sing  
evermore and evermore.

CCLI Song # 7140773

Aurelius Clemens Prudentius | Henry Williams Baker | John Mason Neale

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Grace, mercy and peace  
from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ  
be with us.  
This is the day that the Lord has made.  
**Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

Let us pray with words from Psalm 148

Praise the Lord from the earth, ♦  
**you sea monsters and all deeps;**  
Fire and hail, snow and mist, ♦  
**tempestuous wind, fulfilling his word;**  
Mountains and all hills, ♦  
**fruit trees and all cedars;**  
Wild beasts and all cattle, ♦  
**creeping things and birds on the wing;**  
Kings of the earth and all peoples, ♦  
**princes and all rulers of the world;**  
Young men and women,  
    old and young together; ♦  
**let them praise the name of the Lord.**  
For his name only is exalted, ♦  
**his splendour above earth and heaven.**  
He has raised up the horn of his people  
    and praise for all his faithful servants, ♦  
**the children of Israel, a people who are near him.**  
**Alleluia.**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
    **As it was in the beginning,**  
    **is now and shall be for ever.**

SoF 155 Hark! the herald angels sing

1. Hark! the herald angels sing  
‘Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!’  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
join the triumph of the skies,

with th'angelic hosts proclaim,  
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'  
Hark! the herald angels sing:  
'Glory to the newborn King!'

2. Christ, by highest heav'n adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold Him come,  
offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!  
Hail th'incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel,  
Hark the herald angels sing:  
'Glory to the newborn King!'

3. Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
ris'n with healing in His wings.  
Mild, He lays His glory by;  
born that man no more may die;  
born to raise the sons of earth;  
born to give them second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing;  
'Glory to the newborn King!'

CCLI Song # 27738  
Charles Wesley | Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy  
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The Collect for today, the First Sunday of Christmas

God in Trinity,  
eternal unity of perfect love:  
gather the nations to be one family,  
and draw us into your holy life  
through the birth of Emmanuel,  
our Lord Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

The reading is taken from Galatians 4:4-7

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God  
**Our hearts and our minds are open**

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba*, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

This is the word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

The reading is taken from Luke 2:15-21

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke  
**Glory to you, O Lord**

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

Homily

To begin I have a little confession to make. Having been part of the Roots & Shoots evenings with Bishop Trevor I was blessed with some (at least for me) new insights about the "Our Father"

- this quite short, unpretentious and in its modest simplicity seemingly simple-minded prayer that Jesus gave to his disciples when they asked him: "Lord, teach us to pray!" (Luke 11:1).

I knew I would lead the service at the end of the year and thought that would be a good opportunity to dig in deeper and read Helmut Thielicke's book bishop Trevor had recommended to us: "The Prayer That Spans the World: Sermons on the Lord's Prayer" but how on earth would I span the divide between the readings and this topic?

A little tense I checked today's readings and happily read:

Because you are sons and daughters, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!" (Galatians 4:6 CEB)

Grateful I had read Thielicke's book I prepared today's meditation dealing with the Our Father's beginning that tries to convey a few of his thoughts combined with what we talked about at Roots & Shoots.

***Our Father in heaven,***

In the Greek version "Pater" is the first word that in the everyday Aramaic that Jesus spoke would be "Abba" which is "Daddy" in English and not the more formal "Father". You quickly see that we can only say "Daddy" if there is already a relationship. Jesus the Christ takes us as his sisters and brothers into his relationship with the one to whom the psalmist sings you "created my

innermost parts; you knit me together while I was still in my mother's womb." (Psalm 139:13) Jesus the Way spans the gap that divided us from God.

"Daddy" is not said in the formality of an official letter, it's rather used in an informal telephone call that begins with "Hi, it's me!" knowing that the other will recognise your voice because he has called you first and is waiting for you.

It's the answering "Speak, for your servant is listening." that Eli teaches to Samuel when the Lord calls him. (1 Samuel 3:10b).

It's the trusting "Here I am, a total mess!" that's handed down to us by Mother Mary Clare of the Sisters of the Love of God. This is a Church of England Community in Oxford.

Or - as today's reading says: It's Jesus' spirit in our deepest centre, crying "Abba, Father!"

And that he is "in heaven" - does this mean that he is far away from us here on earth? The opposite is true: The heavenly God is unique and so much more than an earthly parent could ever be. "In heaven" says to me: Be careful never to confuse your images with godly reality. Be aware that you will never be able to grasp God's powerful love and merciful power. Solomon prayed thousands of years ago: "In truth, the heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you." (1 Kings 8:27 EHV).

God provided the best image of him himself: Currently we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. And he - the Immanuel - is with us everywhere, always, "until the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20 CEV).

***hallowed be your name, ...***

Biblically speaking a name is part of a person or a thing. It reveals one's secret, shows your nature and essence, gives you your identity. God's name is deeply linked with him himself. It dwells within the temple in

Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 12:11) where God reveals himself to his people.

God lets Moses explain to Aaron and his sons that when they issue the blessing "they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them". (Numbers 6:27) Therefore we are told to deal reverently with God's name: "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God." (Exodus 20:07) The only adequate answer to this name is an attitude of awe.

But there is yet another layer to it. Brother John of Taizé writes in his book about the Ten Commandments:

"those called by God misuse his Name when their way of life is not in harmony with the faith they profess. That is why, at the beginning of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, he tells them to pray that God's Name be made holy (Matthew 6:9]. In other words, the Lord's Prayer asks that all may discover God's true identity through the lives of those who have been touched by him and who have set out on the road of discipleship. To the extent that they allow God to shine forth in their lives, they communicate his true Name to others."

How devastating if we really let this thought touch our heart!

Forward-looking to the next line it's almost impossible to fail to hear John the Baptist's voice: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (Matthew 3:2) Only if we are honest with ourselves do we appreciate that it is the father whom we depend on, the son who showed us the way back and walks every step with us.

Jesus guides our gaze away from ourselves to the father: "Not I, but your name be hallowed!" "Hallowed be your name" means now: Abba, I will trust you. I will believe that nothing and no-one "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:39b)

Let me end with St. John Climacus who said beautifully: "To repent is not to look downwards at my

own shortcomings, but upwards at God's love. It is not to look backwards with self-reproach but forward with trustfulness. It is to see not what I have failed to be, but what by the grace of Christ I might yet become. Amen.

### SoF 36 Away in a manger

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head;  
the stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,  
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

2. The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes;  
I love You, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky  
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

3. Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask You to stay  
close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in Your tender care,  
and fit us for heaven to live with You there.

CCLI Song # 5950085  
John Thomas McFarland | William James Kirkpatrick  
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### Intercessions (modified from the Church of England prayers for Christmas by Will)

Holy Jesus,  
by being born one of us,  
and lying humbly in a manger,  
you show how much God loves the world.  
Let the light of your love always shine in our hearts,  
until we reach our home in heaven,  
and see you on your throne of glory.  
Amen.

Jesus, whose mother was Mary:  
we give thanks for those who have been mothers and

fathers to us,  
and for your own coming into this world.

Loving Jesus,  
you were born in a stable but worshipped by the  
angels.  
Be with all who are lonely,  
and with all who feel distant from celebrations.  
Be a living hope that lightens hearts.

Christ, for whom there was no room in the inn,  
give shelter to all who are homeless;  
Lord in your mercy  
**hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
your birth at Bethlehem  
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth:  
accept our heartfelt praise  
as we worship you,  
our Saviour and our eternal God.  
Christ, who then fled into Egypt,  
give comfort to all refugees;  
Lord in your mercy  
**hear our prayer.**

The kings, Lord,  
brought myrrh, frankincense, and gold.  
Lord, we have nothing of our own to bring;  
we bring you what you have given:  
our lives for your life.  
Jesus, as you healed the sick,  
bring the gift of healing to those in our families who  
are ill today.  
in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Jesus, Saviour, son of Mary,  
you know us and love us,  
you share our lives  
and hear our prayer.  
Glory to you for ever.  
**Amen.**



## The Conclusion

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,  
and keep us in eternal life.

**Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Postlude

SoF 489 See amid the winter's snow (organ prelude  
and carol)

1. See amid the winter's snow,  
born for us on earth below,  
see the Lamb of God appears  
promised from eternal years.  
Hail, thou ever blessèd morn!  
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!  
Sing through all Jerusalem.  
Christ is born in Bethlehem!

2. Lo, within a manger lies  
He who built the starry skies,  
He who throned in heights sublime  
sits amid the cherubim  
Hail, thou ever blessèd morn!  
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!  
Sing through all Jerusalem.  
Christ is born in Bethlehem!

CCLI Song # 3910371  
Edward Caswall | John Goss  
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