

**The Benefice of the Piddle Valley,  
Hilton and Ansty,  
Cheselbourne and Melcombe Horsey**

**Sunday 23rd December 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent**

**Altar Colour – Purple**



*Psalm 80: 1-8*

*Mic. 5: 2-5a*

**Collect:** God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

**Hebrews 10:5-10 (ESV)**

***Christ's Sacrifice Once for All***

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

**COMMENT:** The message of this obscure passage indicates that Christ was born to die as the sacrifice for the sin of the world. In our modern celebration of Christmas, we tend to neglect this all important aspect of our faith: the Easter story begins at Christmas. The passage quotes Christ, but in reality it is a quotation from Psalm (40:6-8.) That psalm is a song of praise for God’s help and has no messianic connotations at all. However, this excerpt does echo the prophetic messages of Micah (6:6-8) and Jeremiah (31: 31-34.) The point of this interpretation is to lift up the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, which God willed, as vastly superior to the repeated sacrifices of Israel’s temple ritual. The Christian doctrine of sanctifying grace which enables us to be obedient to God’s law of love finds its simplest definition here. The interweaving of the Old Testament and the Gospel also stands out in this passage. Both testaments are essential elements of a mature Christian faith as both testaments tell the same story of God’s redemptive activity for the

restoration of God's creation - and all of humanity as part of creation - to its proper relationship to God. This is what the author of Hebrews means by his use of the word "sanctified (sanctus)" The Greek word is 'hagiazō' (trans. "to make holy "). The only way for us to be made holy is in relationship to God who alone is holy. The claim of the author of Hebrews is that, according to divine will, only through faith in the sacrifice of Christ is this possible. There has been a widespread misunderstanding that some Christians emphasize only personal holiness. Such a limited view ignores the significant leadership of many 19th and 20th Century evangelicals as William Wilberforce, Anthony Shaftesbury, Walter Rauschenbusch, Reinhard Niebuhr and numerous others that to be fully expressed holiness must include the whole social order and all cultural systems. Even John Wesley in the 18th century regarded sanctification as incomplete as long as society remained unchanged by converted Christian men and women. Accordingly, the celebration of Advent and Christmas must include not only a genuine concern for the poor and disadvantaged, as in the original legend of St. Nicholas, but also a witness to God's will that the reign of God be established in all human relationships and social institutions.

### **Luke 1:39-55 (ESV)**

#### ***Mary Visits Elizabeth***

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

#### ***Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat***

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever." Footnote: a. or believed, for there will be

**COMMENT:** The story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, John the Baptist's mother, has an air of immediacy and intimacy about it. Some have speculated that the story came from Mary herself. On the other hand, the birth narratives of Luke 1 and 2 are more likely oral legend and poetry which may have circulated as a separate collection long before the gospel was written about AD 80-90. The story as it stands gives some very natural insight into these two women's experience. They rejoiced in each other's pregnancy. They needed each other's support. They realized how blessed they were to be bearing God's miraculous gifts to humanity. What modern mother who willingly and intentionally bears a child does not sense the same joyful hope that they felt? Mary's Song, known for centuries by its Latin name The Magnificat, was almost certainly modeled on Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel (2:1-10.) But that the circumstances of that source are more closely parallel to Elizabeth's, who like Hannah, conceived late in life. Most likely Luke or his Jewish source composed a typical hymn of praise based on Hannah's prayer and other Old Testament references. (v:49-50 cf. Ps. 103:17; 111:9) These were adapted to fit this situation, a common practice of New Testament authors. As it stands, the psalm promised the social justice of the messianic age for which the world is still waiting in hope. However they may have come into being, these passages conveyed the faith of the church, then and still, that in Jesus, God who loves the world came to bring all creation into a living relationship with God now and for all eternity. This relationship extends to every human activity and institution as well as to each individual. The Incarnation and the Resurrection had but that one purpose: the redemption of the world through the spiritual resources made available through faith in Jesus Christ, born of Mary.

### **Prayer Requests.**

Please continue to pray for:

Colin Webb who is recovering at home from surgery and for his family, Ruth, Anna, & Sarah, Meg & Roger Gray.

For Rev'd Benny Hazlehurst and his wife Mel, and children Iona and Isaac.

For Robin & Victoria Maslin and their two children.

For Ted, Michelle Simpson, Ann Lambert, Chrissie Combes, June Kellaway, Betty – Hillary and Jane, Rev'd Deb Smith.



***Requiescant in pace*** – Graham Keen of Piddletrenthide. Please pray for Janet and the family.

## What's going on around the Benefice!



### Christmas Eve

**Christingle @ Cheselbourne 3.30pm**

**Christingle @ Piddletrenthide 5.00pm**

**Christingle @ Hilton 5.30pm**

**Midnight Mass @ Hilton 11.30am**

**Midnight Mass @ Piddlehinton @ 11.30am**

THE  
**WEEK**  
AHEAD

### Christmas Day

*(Altar Colour White)*

Psalm 98

Isaiah 52:7-10

Hebrews 1: 1-4 (5-12)

John 1: 1-14

**Joint Benefice Christmas Day Eucharist @ Piddletrenthide 9.30am**

**Lessons and Carols @ Melcombe Horsey 11.00am**

Joy  
to  
the  
World

### Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> December 2018

*(Altar Colour – White)*

Psalm 148

1 Sam 2: 18-20, 26

Col. 3: 12-17

Luke 2: 41-end

**Benefice Family Eucharist Service @ Piddlehinton 9.30am**

**We look forward to seeing you all at services over the Christmas Period.**

**Fr. Roger, Ginny and family**

**Rector – Rev'd Fr. Roger J. Butcher, The Vicarage,  
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