



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

Sunday 15th November 2020 – 2nd Before Advent Sunday

Readings: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-end, Psalm 90: 1-8, 1 Thess 5: 1-11, Matthew 25: 14-30

Collect: Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son was revealed to destroy the works of the devil and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life: grant that we, having this hope, may purify ourselves even as he is pure; that when he shall appear in power and great glory we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18 (ESV) - The Day of the LORD Is Near

Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests. At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.' Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them." The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

COMMENT: Ninth among those "Minor Prophets" of the Old Testament, Zephaniah was contemporary of Jeremiah during the late years of the 7th century BC. He supported Josiah's religious reformation that sought to purify Jewish worship and morality and centralize it under the temple priesthood in Jerusalem. He also strenuously opposed idolatrous practices which had been rampant for several previous decades. During this same period Babylon had replaced the Assyrian empire as the dominant foreign power.

Matthew 25:14-30 (ESV) - The Parable of the Talents

"For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled

accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

COMMENT: The parable of the talents also deals with Christ's expected return, but in a different way. He is to come not merely to establish the reign of God, but to judge those who have been spiritually faithful and those who have not. This is a story which, like so many of the parables, exaggerates a simple action to emphasize its meaning. Not only would the action of the master appear outrageous to those who heard the story, the amount of money involved was so great as to raise doubts about his sanity. In those days, a talent would have been equal to about fifteen years' wages for a labourer. Furthermore, would a wise master have entrusted so much wealth to slaves? While this was an exorbitant sum of money, the meaning of the parable has nothing to do with money. The issue is faithfulness, not how one attends to investments. The reward given to the dutiful servants also causes one to wonder about the fairness of the story's outcome. The rather sad end of the story is the clue, however harsh and unjust it may seem to us. Again it must be seen as exaggeration for effect. Yet it disturbed ancient interpreters as much as is still disturbs modern minds. Nonetheless, severe as it appears to us, the parable drives home the point that God's final judgment is a real and significant element of our Christian tradition. God's grace is not to be wasted, but used as an opportunity to develop one's moral and spiritual life. The issue is not so much that of missing an opportunity, but of losing it. Placed as it is in Matthew's Gospel just prior to the Passion story, this parable and the two which accompany it undergird the urgency of the matter. Spiritual life brings a responsibility of momentous import to each person and to every Christian fellowship.

Post Communion: Gracious Lord, in this holy sacrament you give substance to our hope: bring us at the last to that fullness of life for which we long; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Amen

Blessing: Christ our King make you faithful and strong to do his will, that you may reign with him in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Benefice Prayer list.

- Please pray for those who are suffering from poor health, those recovering from hospital treatment or surgery, for the grieving and lonely.
- Please pray that we are responsible for our actions and follow the restrictions imposed upon us to protect those who are vulnerable to the virus and to enable the Health Service to continue to provide care in all areas.
- Please pray for our friends, family and neighbours including: Ann Lambert, Geoff Harris, Robin Dibble, June Kellaway, Robin Saunders, Anna Thomas, Anita, Jon, Bernard & David. Lesley's family and friends.
- For those in care homes including: Roger Gray (Dorchester) and June Smith (Warminster).



Any additions or amendments to the prayer list, please email the Rector.

Benefice Notices

THE
WEEK
AHEAD

Public Worship & Live Streaming

- Public Worship has been suspended under the Government lockdown 2.
- Churches will continue to be opened for Private Prayer. (See separate timetable)
- Daily live streaming of the offices will continue.
- 6pm Daily Prayer for the nation during lockdown have been recorded for automated streaming.
- Live Streamed Sunday Services - 9.30am Communion and 6pm Evening Prayer.

Facebook to access livestream:

https://www.facebook.com/piddlevalley/?eid=ARAxjQNj5mPHQUQD2hKEx_uzUyyf17basudX3D22bYJx4HsCh7ByYB8lItrMbHhsARvgwbTqvapn-Glq

YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0ru_v3_1MZyzx72ka63g4A

Food Bank: Please leave donations in church or at the Vicarage, Piddletrenthide.

Police Chaplaincy: Fr. Roger will continue to visit Dorchester Station twice a month.

Rector - Fr. Roger J. Butcher SSC KSJ

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