



BENEFICE BULLETIN

Church News for
Bedale, Burrill, Leeming and Thornton Watlass

18th December 2022

Fourth Sunday of Advent

OUR PRAYERS ARE ASKED FOR

Bel Newman, Marge Craddock, Lesley Hall, Delma Bode, John Hall, Chris, Elise, Jenny, Lynne Riddlestone, Olive Robinson, Barbara Jaques, Harry Scorer, David Disney, Harry Lillystone and Edwin in Bolivia.

RIP

Keith Rumford - *May he rest in peace and rise in glory*

COLLECT AND READINGS

Fourth Candle - The Candle of Joy - Mary the Mother of Jesus

Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord **Thanks be to God**

Last Sunday we lit the Candle of Love. We light it, and the Candles of Hope and Peace again as we remember that Jesus, born in Bethlehem, will come again to fulfil all of God's promises and bring us everlasting peace and joy.

(A person lights the Candles of Hope, Peace, and Love)

Today we light the Fourth Candle of Advent, the Candle of Joy. When the angel Gabriel told Mary that a special child would be born to her she was filled with joy. She sang a song that began with the words: "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour". Just as the birth of Jesus gave great joy to his mother, so his presence in the world gave joy to those who had none before. He healed them and gave them hope and peace when they believed in him. From hope, peace, and love grows joy.

We light the Candle of Joy to remind us that when Jesus is born in us we have joy and that through him there will be everlasting joy on earth.

(A person lights the Fourth Candle the Candle of Joy)

Joy is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at this candle we celebrate the joy we find in Jesus Christ.

Thank you God for the joy you give us. We ask that as we wait for all your promises to come true, and for Christ to come again, that you would remain present with us. Help us today, and everyday to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your joy with each other. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

Sing - Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

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.

First Reading - Isaiah 7.10–16

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.'

Second Reading - Romans 1.1–7

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 1.18–25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Post Communion Prayer

Heavenly Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour: fill us your servants with your grace, that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL

The coming of the Lord is a word of hope, healing and judgement because the Lord's coming will mean transformation of everything.

Isaiah 35.1-10

This poem needs to be read following chapter 34 in which God's judgement on Israel's enemies is announced. The poet assumes the task of speaking for God, announcing that after the days of divine vengeance there will come a glorious homecoming. Some scholars link chapter 35 with post-exilic Second Isaiah. Perhaps it is best expressed as the overture to the main opera. The theme of a new exodus is prominent. The poet describes not so much details of historical actions as cosmic eschatological expectations. Everything will be transformed by God and the people will come to Zion with despair turned to joy. Even creation shares this joy as it, too, is transformed. The new exodus is not through a dry desert but a fertile garden as all creation is healed and restored. The poem has four stanzas. Verses 1-2 announce the news of transformation and the sight of the Lord's glory, revealed in creation and history. Verses 3-4 contain perhaps the most common command in the Bible, 'Fear not'. Although God's coming means judgement, it is, at the same time, salvation. Verses 5-7 picture healing of bodies and minds. Both human and natural disabilities are put to rights. The final stanza pictures the highway, the return of the dispersed. All the usual threats to travellers are gone, but the way is restricted to the holy. It is a great festival procession, with God's people singing in praise at the end of sorrow and tears. Given that Israel has known economic and political oppression, this work of liberation is no spiritual matter alone. All this is the work of God who will not leave the earth or its people as they are.

James 5.7-10

James has been issuing words of warning and condemnation relating to poor Christian practice. Now he majors on what makes and sustains a community faithful to God. He assumes that such a group of people will be different from others because of their fundamental loyalty. All James' teaching is set, like the rest of the New Testament letters, in an eschatological context, waiting for the Lord. Typically he uses an everyday illustration, of a farmer who cannot force the crop but must wait with patience. So Christians must be patient, even in suffering. 'Strengthen your hearts' involves the will; living with a pure intention. So, no grumbling and backstabbing because the judge is near, at the door! Follow the example of the faithful prophets who suffered for the word. Patient endurance and faithfulness are Christian virtues.

Matthew 11.2-11

John the Baptist, in prison for his ministry, has his doubts about Jesus. He asks a fundamental question which Matthew poses for all his readers. 'Are you the one who is to come, or do we wait for another?' Earlier John seemed so sure, but whatever he expected, the reality is different. We do not know what John's expectations of Jesus were. Possibly he hoped for a rather more forceful person. But now he poses the big question about Jesus' identity. Jesus' reply points John to what has been going on: the blind see, the deaf hear and so on. In fact, all that Isaiah promised about transformation is taking place. The beatitude in verse 6 is both promise and warning, true to the double-edged nature of the eschatological gospel. Now Jesus asks about the expectations of him, of John and others. What did they expect to see in the wilderness? Someone who bends with whatever wind is blowing? Someone with all the trappings of human pomp? If they went to the wilderness to hear a prophet then they got what they wanted and more. John, according to Jesus, was a prophet, standing in the great tradition of prophecy, speaking the word of God. Malachi is invoked to make the point. But this means with John something comes to an end. John belongs with the past, the last and greatest of the prophets. But with his ministry the old age gives way to the new and, with the new, standards of greatness have changed.

Service Times and Venues

Thursdays 10:30am BCP communion at St Gregory's

| | <i>Morning Services - St Gregory's, Bedale</i> | <i>Morning Services - St Mary's, St John's and Burrill</i> | <i>16.00—Evensong conference call</i> |
|----------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| 18th Dec | 9:15am St Gregory's *F | 10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #* | 6pm Carol Service, Bedale |
| | | 11am St John's, Leeming # | |
| 25th Dec | 10am St Gregory's | 9 am Burrill Church #* | None |
| | | 10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #* | |
| 1st Dec | 8am St Gregory's #* | 10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass | St Gregory's, Bedale * |
| | 9.15am St Gregory's #*F | 11am St John's, Leeming #* | |

Communion * conference call F Facebook



Advent Prayer and Praise
This Sunday - 18th December
At 5pm online



CHRISTMAS SERVICES

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Time</i> | <i>Service and Location</i> |
|-------------------------|-------------|--|
| Sunday 18th December | 6:00pm | Carol Service - St Gregory's, Bedale |
| Monday 19th December | 6:30pm | Carols around the village - Burrill |
| Tuesday 20th December | 6:30pm | Carols around the village - Thornton Watlass |
| Wednesday 21st December | 6:00pm | Carol Service - St John's, Leeming |
| Saturday 24th December | 3:00pm | Crib Service - St Mary's, Thornton Watlass |
| Saturday 24th December | 4:00pm | Crib Service - St Gregory's, Bedale |
| Saturday 24th December | 7:00pm | Christmas Communion - St John's, Leeming |
| Saturday 24th December | 11:30pm | Midnight Communion - St Mary's, Thornton Watlass |
| Saturday 24th December | 11:30pm | Midnight Communion - St Gregory's, Bedale |
| Sunday 25th December | 9:00am | Holy Communion - Burrill Mission Church |
| Sunday 25th December | 10:00am | Family Service - Bedale |
| Sunday 25th December | 10:45am | Holy Communion, St Mary's, Thornton Watlass |