

## **Advent 2 The Lord of lords**

### **Welcome and Introduction** Revd Wendy Gourlay

Welcome - once again from the Mid Loes Deanery, and to the second of four online reflective services for the Christmas season.

Our liturgy, for worship, comes from two Ordained clergy - David Adam and John Cox. David was vicar of Lindisfarne, off the Northumbrian coast, until retirement in 2003, and has inspired many to worship in the Celtic tradition.

John Cox, was Archdeacon of Sudbury, here in Suffolk, before his post of Diocesan Director of Education – retiring in 2010. He writes “it is through Jesus’ relationships and stories that we see the outworking of his teaching – and we are invited not simply to listen, but to enter into the accounts as participants.’

So, once again we hear an imaginative Story of a biblical character for us to reflect upon.

Today, we continue with the Advent theme as we reflect the coming of Jesus as Lord of lords.

### **Gathering Scripture over lighting of Advent wreath**

God of the mountains and the valleys, **we come to worship you.**

God of the woodlands and the meadows, **we come to worship you.**

God of the towns and villages, **we come to worship you.**

God of our past and of our future, **we come to worship you.**

God of our present, **we come to worship you.**

Heavenly Father,  
give us eyes to see your presence all around us, ears to hear your voice amidst the hubbub of our world, and hearts willing to obey your call to act for you; that people may be freed from fear, from hurt and guilt. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Rescuer and Redeemer. **Amen**

## **Opening Prayer** - read by Jo Reed

Jesus Christ our Lord is the light of the World.

**A light no darkness can put out.**

Blessed are you, Lord God Almighty, for you have revealed your presence to us through prophets, saints and holy people. As you made yourself known to Moses may we know that you are with us and abide with us in our journeying. Blessed are you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

## **Confession** - read by Jo Reed

Father, when you call to us and we do not listen; when we have gone our own way rather than turn aside to see your burning presence;

**forgive us in your mercy.**

Father, when we have approached, careless that we stand on holy ground; when we have heard your call and excused ourselves from the service you have asked of us;

**forgive us in your mercy.**

Father, when we have tried to do too much, and have not trusted others to share in the task, believing we are the only ones who can do it well:

**forgive us in your mercy.**

## **Hymn** – O come, O come Emmanuel

### **Scripture Reading** – Acts 7:30-34 read by Jane Woodbury-Eggins

Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him (Moses) in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush. When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight; and as he approached to look, there came the voice of the Lord: 'I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.'

Moses began to tremble and did not dare to look.

Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I have surely seen the mistreatment of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their groaning and have come down to rescue them. Come now, I will send you to Egypt.'

For the Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Reflective Story – Jethro, whose god is it anyway.**

(See Exodus 18: 1-27)

Let me rest a while and I'll tell you what I've been doing. I've been away visiting my son-in-law Moses. Just got back. It's years since I first saw him, yet it seems as only yesterday. He was a stranger then, a fugitive from Egypt where there had been some trouble. A man got killed, I believe, but I never enquired too closely. Moses was certainly no trouble here. Far from it. He first came to my attention because of his kindness to my daughters. It's a familiar story. You know how it was back then. Trouble with some ruffians at the well, and Moses drove them off and helped the girls water their flocks. I gave him Zipporah, the little bird, to be his wife. It seemed the right thing to do. He stayed a good while and learnt to be a good shepherd.

In the summer when the grasslands dry up in the wilderness he would take the flocks to the hills. It was on one of those trips the big change came over him. He got religion you might say and as a priest I took that very seriously. He was on our sacred mountain, Horeb, the place of God. Sinai some call it. Same difference. Anyhow, the way he told me, it was while he was on the mountain slope he saw this strange sight – a bush blazing away but not consumed. I could have told him, of course, fire like that means God is near. But he didn't know and was simply curious. Went across and it quite shocked him when he heard this voice telling him to take his shoes off. Only right of course in a holy place. And then, he said, God told him he had to go back to Egypt to rescue his people from the terrible things that were happening to them as slaves of the Pharaoh. By all accounts he took some persuading. Well, it was a big ask. He made all kinds of excuses. But God showed him some powerful signs to try and convince him, even gave him leprosy at one point. He still made excuses, saying he was no speaker, not like his brother Aaron, which was true. But God wasn't having any of it – he'd use both of them to rescue his people.

To tell you the truth I didn't really know what to make of it. But when he asked me if he could go back to Egypt, what could I say? I sent him off with my blessing. He always insisted it was the God of his ancestors he'd met that day – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But you know as well as I do that we Midianites have worshipped the God of the mountain for ages.

Our God is Yahweh and I never heard that he was God of Isaac or Jacob. It was new to Moses as well, as far as I could make out. Yet he insisted it was his ancestors' God. Once upon a time I would have got all fussed about all that but now it seems to matter less. It's what God is that's important, worshipping him, living life his way. The name matters less.

Just see what he did for the Israelites. You can't argue with that. Rescue was what he had promised and as sure as eggs are eggs that's what happened. Moses got them away and it was obvious God was on their side or they'd have had no chance. Pharaoh wasn't going to let a whole heap of slaves slip away like that, so he sent his army after them across the red Sea to cut them off but a great storm wrecked their boats. Drowned the lot, and the people got away into the desert out of Pharaoh's reach.

Anyhow that was some time ago but when I heard they'd come in our direction I decided to go out and meet up with Moses again. I took the daughter and the grandchildren along with me. I found him near the mountain of God, Mount Sinai. It's funny how things come round full circle. He greeted me kindly and told me all the things that had happened since we'd last seen each other, and how God had rescued them. I praised the Lord for that. It made me realise that the God of Sinai was indeed the greatest of all gods. We could join in worship of him together. And that's exactly what we did with burnt offerings and sacrifices and a meal before the Lord.

I had a look round while I was there. I saw how Moses had things organised. It's a big job he's got there. Too much really. I told him so. There he was each morning in his tent with people coming for his advice, wanting a word from the Lord. They wanted him to decide this, judge that. There was no end to it. It's more than one man can be expected to do. I told him straight: 'You'll wear yourself out if you carry on like that. What you need to do,' I said, 'is take the people's cases to the Lord, and teach the people the laws of God, but don't try and do it on your own. You've got to delegate'. I'd learnt that by myself. So I told him to choose some honest men, men the people would trust, and appoint them as judges. They could deal with the minor cases and leave the important ones for him. He could see I was talking sense. So that's what he's done and once he'd got it all set up I left and came back here.

I'm getting too old for all this travelling around. But it was good to see the boy again. God has been with him, the God I've served all these years: Yahweh of the mountain. God of his ancestors, as he would say. Well be that as it may. There's no God like him. He's the God of Israel now, that's for sure.

*I invite you to a short period of reflection. A visual slideshow will be accompanied by the tune "Invitation" ©2017 Wendy Gourlay*

## **Intercessions** - Led by Fay Clarke

Let us pray together, for the leaders of the nations: that they may show wisdom and courage, that all may live in peace and share the good things of the earth.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who govern: that they may treat all with fairness, that none may be exploited, none pushed to the margins or left in poverty.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the leaders of our churches: that they may teach your Word, guiding your people with holiness and caring for all with compassion.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for our homes: that they may be places of love, welcoming to strangers and hospitable to neighbours, most especially throughout this Covid-19 pandemic.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are in need: for the lonely and the bewildered, for the sick and the anxious, for the dying and the grieving.

We also pray for our medical services, researchers and all who are caring for the vulnerable.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

*As our Saviour taught us so we pray*

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.**

**Amen**

**Hymn** – Be still for the presence of the Lord

## **A prayer of special intention**

Lord teach us and all peoples to live by your law of love.

Guide us in our journeying through life; strengthen and sustain all who are struggling; shield and shelter us until we enter the fullness of your kingdom.

We ask this in the love of our Lord, Jesus Christ. **Amen**

## **Closing Prayer**

The leading of the Lord go before us.

The light of the Lord be about us.

The love of the Lord enfold us.

Now and for evermore.

Heavenly Father, you appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush  
and gave your law on Sinai;

come and save us with your mighty arm and redeem us.

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

May the Lord when he comes find us watching and waiting.

## **Blessing**

May God the Father, who calls you to his service;

God the Son, who rescues you from all that binds you;

God the Holy Spirit, who guides and strengthens you;

bless you and keep you, this day and for evermore.

And may the Blessing of God Almighty.....

Credits:

Liturgies: Candle Prayers: David Adam © 2010 Kevin Mayhew  
Relationships: John Cox © 2010 Kevin Mayhew

Music: Complete Anglican Hymns Old & New © 2000 Kevin Mayhew  
Meditation tune 'Invitation' © 2017 Wendy Gourlay

Artwork & Photos: Wendy Gourlay © 2016 & 2020  
PxFuel.com © 2020

With thanks to: Jackie Clark, Fay Clarke, Jo Reed,  
Jane Woodbury-Eggs & Revd Wendy Gourlay.

Words & Music: All rights reserved. Used with permission under ONE LICENCE 736789-A