



Worship resources - includes sermon outlines

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

The First Reading - Judges 4: 1-7

The people of Israel are now settled in the Promised Land. Judges tells the story of the gradual conquest of much of Palestine not already held. It tells of reverses, times when the people of Israel were subjugated by pagan peoples, attributing this misfortune to deviation from God's ways. Each time, a "judge", a wise charismatic leader, arises as God's spokesperson and frees Israel from its oppressors.

The Psalm - Psalm 123

The Second Reading - 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

This letter is perhaps the oldest book in the New Testament. Paul (with Silvanus and Timothy) founded the church there during his second missionary journey, and as is recorded in Acts 17, was forced to leave the city due to persecution. Many Greeks who already worshipped God, many pagans and "important women" became Christians. The letter was written from Athens to strengthen the new Christians in their faith.

The Gospel Reading - Matthew 25: 14-30

This gospel is the first in the New Testament, but it was probably the second to be written. Scholars recognize that it borrows material from Mark, and from a *sayings* source containing sayings of Jesus and known as Q (for *Quelle*, German for *source*). The author shows an understanding of Jewish culture and religion not found in the other gospels. It was probably written about 60 to 70 AD, possibly for a largely Jewish audience.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Judges
%204:%201-7%0Acw%20Psalm%20123%0A1%20Thessalonians
%205:%201-11%0AMatthew%2025:%2014-30](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Judges%204:%201-7%0Acw%20Psalm%20123%0A1%20Thessalonians%205:%201-11%0AMatthew%2025:%2014-30)

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

O God,
whose blessed Son was manifested
that he might destroy the works of the devil,
and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life;
Grant us, we beseech thee, that, having this hope,
we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure;
that when he shall appear again with power and great glory,
we may be made like unto him
in his eternal and glorious kingdom;
where with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Spirit,
he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end.

and/or

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 and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

After the words 'Let us pray to the Lord', we say '**Lord, have mercy**'.

Let us pray.
For the peace that comes from God alone,
for the unity of all peoples,
and for the good of our souls:
Let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the whole Church of Christ,
in its diversity and confusion,
as well as in its sense of mission and vision,

that its worship may be true, and its service and sacrifice genuine:
Let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For people in need:
those for whom life is a bitter struggle;
those whose lives are clouded by death or loss, pain or disability,
discouragement or fear, shame or rejection.
that they may know the warmth, the comfort and the assurance of your love.
Let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the nations of the world, especially those countries where there is strife
and uncertainty, and where those who claim authority and power do so
without their people's consent;
for the peoples of those nations most troubled by civil strife and violence;
for those in positions of power and authority;
for opinion-formers and people of influence in our society;
Let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who mourn the loss of loved ones, whatever the circumstances;
for those whose lives have been turned upside down by tragedy or illness;
for those who are anxious about what tomorrow may bring;
Let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Jesus Christ is the light of the World, a light which no darkness can quench.
We remember before God those who have died and light a candle to
symbolise the light of Christ which eternally shines and brings hope. We
remember today AAA

You turn our darkness into light and in your light shall we see light.

Merciful Father :

**accept these prayer for the sake of your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ,
Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

In our prayers today we will especially remember those people whose lives
have been warped and stunted by evil.

Let us pray.

Wherever people grow up without the example and encouragement of loving
folk who have respect for themselves and others; may your saving love
abound.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The Second Sunday before Advent YEAR A November 16, 2014

Wherever people live with a bitterness of spirit which poisons and distresses all those who live around them; may your saving love abound.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Wherever some live greedily, without gratitude or generosity, always keeping a ruthless eye on the happiness and possession of others; may your saving love abound.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Wherever men resort to violence, rape, brutality, terrorism and warfare, spreading immense misery and accelerating hatreds; may your saving love abound.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Wherever women suffer disease, handicap, injustices, exploitation, slavery, or forced prostitution, and have no faith or hope to succour them; may your saving love abound.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Wherever communities of mixed races are torn by rumours, old resentments and new patterns of discrimination; may your saving love abound.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Wherever folk sit with the dying, make funeral arrangements, or spend sleepless nights grieving and fearing; may your saving love abound.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Holy Friend, you cherish every single soul on this planet. Please teach us, slow learners that we are, how to better live together, organise communities, end injustice, and eradicate all those evils that defile the sacred, divine image that resides in us all. Through Jesus our elder Brother and our Saviour.

Amen!

POST COMMUNION

Gracious Lord,
in this holy sacrament you give substance to our hope.
Bring us at the last to that pure life for which we long,

through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

PRAYERS

God, the ruler of all,
mercifully grant that we may be fruitful in good works
and attain to the glorious crown of your saints;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

(An extract from the Church of England's *Collects for Lesser Festivals*)

O Lord, our Father. Lover of human souls,
grant us today your pardon and your peace.
For the sins of our lips
For words untrue and words unclean and words unkind
For the sins of our hands
For all careless work,
for all wrong deeds
For any action which hurt another
Or which made it easier for another to go wrong
For the sins of our minds
For blindness to the truth
For refusal to face the facts
For all dishonest thinking
For the sins of our hearts
For all pride, all wrong desires
And all false loves
Forgive us, O God
Grant us this day
Peace within ourselves
That our inner tensions may be taken away
That we may no longer be torn in indecision
That we may no longer be for ever halted
Between two opinions
Grant us this day
Peace with our fellow humanity
That we may not disturb the fellowship by disputing
That we may never quarrel within our homes or outside them
That we may live in unity will all
Grant us this day, dear Lord
Peace with you
That the certainty that you love us
Make take all fear away
That we may know
That your love has forgiven us
That your grace upholds us
Above all, that your welcome awaits us
And so grant that we may live at peace with ourselves
In the company of all the saints
and at one with you

Though our Lord Jesus Christ

LECTIONARY NOTES

Judges 4:1-7

Joshua is dead; Israel is now under the influence of 12 successive *judges*, charismatic leaders raised up at times of national crisis by the spirit of God, to deliver God's people from pagan oppressors. Judges honestly admits that Israel does not control all of the Canaan; because they "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD" (v. [1](#), [3:12](#) and elsewhere), they were subjugated by other peoples from time to time. Conquest was a gradual process, with many reverses.

The preceding passage, [3:12-30](#), tells the story of "Ehud" ([4:1](#)), a *judge*, a national hero who put an end to domination by the Moabites, the people who lived to the southeast of the Dead Sea. He carried the tribute to Eglon, King of Moab. He tricked Eglon into seeing him in private to hear a secret message from God. Ehud took his concealed sword and assassinated Eglon. Without a leader, the Moabites were in confusion; Ehud was then able to lead the Israelites to victory over the Moabites. God sometimes works in strange ways!

Once again the Israelites disobey God, and so are subjugated: this time by "Jabin" (v. [2](#)), a king who rules at "Hazor" (north of the Sea of Galilee); "Sisera" is his chariot commander. The forces of Jabin are awesome, especially because the Israelites, lacking chariots, are no match for his army on level ground. "Deborah" (v. [4](#)), the fourth of the *judges*, is different from others: she acts as God's spokeswoman in matters of national importance and societal disputes ("judgement", v. [5](#)) but leaves military leadership to "Barak" (v. [6](#)). She orders him, in God's name, to assemble troops drawn from northern tribes ("Naphtali" and "Zebulun") on Mount Tabor. There, God will "draw out" (v. [7](#)) the enemy, and will give Israel victory. The following verses describe the battle. Due to a heavy rainstorm or to the "Kishon" River overflowing its banks (or to both), Sisera's chariots become mired in the mud, and his troops panic. Sisera and all his troops are killed. Israel is once again free.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Paul has just told the Thessalonian Christians that, at the end of the age, both the faithful who have already died and those still alive will ascend to heaven to be with God for ever. Now, he says, concerning when Christ will come again, you are well aware that he will come suddenly and unexpectedly ("like a thief in the night", v. [2](#)). Others who are lulled by the "peace and security" (v. [3](#)) will be separated from God for ever ("sudden destruction"), as suddenly as

a “woman” comes into labour; God’s condemnation of them will be inescapable.

Then, in vv. [4-8a](#), he exhorts his readers to moral vigilance. Being “children of light”, (i.e. united with Christ, the *light* of the world), they will not be surprised by Christ’s second coming. So let us not become careless and sinful (“fall asleep”, v. [6](#)) as others do, but let us be prepared. Let us have the sobriety of people who have peace of mind through trust in God. Sleep and drunkenness are attributes of *children of darkness*, those who ignore or oppose God’s ways.

We are, (here he uses a military image) to possess the Christian virtues of “faith” (v. [8](#)), “love” and “hope” – the certain hope of “salvation”; these virtues protect us from evil. For God has pre-ordained (“destined us”, v. [9](#)) that we are saved through Christ rather than being damned eternally (“wrath”). Jesus rescues us from sin, so that, whether we are alive (“awake”, v. [10](#)) or physically dead (“asleep”) when he comes again, we will live with him in heaven. Finally, he advises his readers to “build up” (v. [11](#)) each other, to support each other spiritually: here he sees the church as the temple of God under construction; the builder is God, and Christians can participate in the work.

Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus continues to tell parables about the kingdom of heaven. In the previous parables, he has told us that we need to be prepared for the Second Coming at all times. Today’s parable is set in the realm of finance. A master, before leaving on a journey, entrusts his slaves with his money, “each according to his ability” (v. [15](#)). (A *talent* was about 15 years’ wages for a labourer, a large sum of money.) Two servants invest the money and earn more (vv. [16](#), [17](#)); the third simply buries it (v. [18](#)). When the master returns (v. [19](#)), he praises the investors; they, he says, will be made responsible for “many things” (vv. [21](#), [23](#)), and will “enter into the joy of your master”. But the third slave, admitting that he was afraid of his master’s wrath (v. [24](#)), simply returns the original sum (v. [25](#)). The master chastises him for his wickedness and laziness. This slave loses what he has been given (v. [28](#)) and is condemned to “outer darkness” (v. [30](#)). This would have caused a stir in Jesus’ day, for a rabbinic maxim commends burial of money as a way of protecting it.

But this parable is about the kingdom of heaven, so what is the lesson it teaches? “Weeping and gnashing of teeth” (v. [30](#)) is a *stock phrase* for condemnation of the wicked at the Last Day. The master stands for God and the servants for various kinds of people. Yes, God both rewards generously and is a stern judge. He expects us to be good stewards of his gifts. We will be commended and rewarded for faithfully carrying out his mission. Failure to

use what he gives us will result in punishment – by separation from him, the essence of goodness. We are expected to make it grow. He is free to distribute his gifts as he sees fit (vv. [28-29](#)).

"Deborah," Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.
Judges 4:1-7

The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. So the LORD sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years. At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'"

The following article was originally published in [Peculiar Treasures](#) and later in [Beyond Words](#).

Deborah was Israel's only woman judge. She looked like Golda Meir and did business under a palm tree. Her business consisted of more than just stepping in and settling things when people got in a wrangle. Like all the other judges of Israel, she was loaded with charisma, and whenever there was any fighting to be done, she was the one who was in charge. Even generals jumped when she snapped her fingers. Barak, for instance.

She summoned him to the palm tree and told him she wanted him to take ten thousand of his best men and beat the stuffing out of the Canaanite forces under a general named Sisera. Barak said he'd do it but indicated he'd feel more secure if Deborah came along. She said she would. She also said it was only fair to warn him, however, that the main glory of the day was going to be not his but a woman's because a woman was going to be the one to wipe out Sisera. In addition to her other hats, Deborah was also something of a prophet and had pronounced feminist sympathies.

Her prediction turned out to be correct, of course. Barak won the battle, but Sisera was disposed of by a lady named Jael in a rather spectacular way, which can be read about later in this book, and to make sure that Jael got all the credit that was coming to her, Deborah wrote a song to help spread the word around.

It is a wonderful song, full of blood and thunder with a lot of hair-raisingly bitter jibes at the end of it about how Sisera's old mother sits waiting at the window for her son to come home, not knowing that Jael has already made mincemeat of him. Deborah composed it, but she got Barak to sing it with her. Barak looked like Moshe Dayan, and it must have been quite a duet. The song brushes by Barak's role rather hastily, but it describes Jael's in lavish detail and must have gotten her all the glory a girl could possibly want. Yahweh himself gets a plug at the end—"So perish all thine enemies, O Lord!" (Judges 5:31)—but by and large the real hero of Deborah's song is herself. Everything was going to pot, the lyrics say, "until you arose, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel" (5:7), and you can't help feeling that Deborah's basic message was that Mother was the one who really saved the day. And of course, with Yahweh's help, she was.

It's hard not to bridle a little at the idea of her standing under the palm tree belting out her own praises like that, but after all, she had a country to run and a war to fight, and she knew that without good press she was licked from the start. Besides maybe the more self-congratulatory parts of her song were the ones that she assigned to Barak.

Psalm 123

Russell Rathburn in his article '*The Hardest Questions*' says of Psalm 123: *We know that prayer is not like picking up the phone and calling King Jesus, but this song is fun and funny and actually does get at something— not so much about God, but about a people's very real desire to communicate and a faithful dependence that a benevolent Presence is there.*

Here then is the essence of the psalm's impact; the need to communicate, listen and wait for God to speak and act. Yet it also expresses the despair of those feel overlooked even down trodden. As a result, it speaks into a spectrum personal and wider situations in which we feel hopeless and moreover powerless.

Another approach to this Psalm is as a Song of Ascent; a pilgrimage hymn for the journey to the Temple in Jerusalem. Therefore, it is a song of faith. It

starts with the theme of looking; the searching for God and seeing of his mercy. This divine support is possibly being invoked in accordance with the covenantal relationship. Therefore, the Psalmist's use of master/servant and maid/mistress analogies in illustration.

But then we turn to the root cause of the Psalmist's vexation. For the Israelite complaint is against arrogance and pride. These grievances are the result of their perpetrators not looking up to heaven but down of their fellows. The message is clear; the faithful look up humbly for assistance whilst the proud look only to themselves without a glance towards the divine will.

Maybe we should leave the last word to St Augustine who, in his commentary on this psalm, wrote:

But that he may not be proud, what ought he to do? Let him lift up his eyes unto Him who dwelleth in heaven, let him not heed himself...

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

We now find ourselves in the strange territory of apocalyptic imagery. The temptation for listeners is to start finding modern day parallels failing to remember the highly complex theological canvas being presented to them. It is best to commence by recalling Irenaeus of Lyon's advice on this passage: *It is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfilment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises, and casting about for any names that may present themselves.*

Whilst few today expect the parousia to occur in their lifetimes, the exhortation for watchfulness remains valuable. Indeed, the term 'intoxication' can easily be applied to the vast number of distractions in western society in this era; allurements that prevent the balancing of spiritual development in hand with material and purely intellectual gains.

Moreover, this passage suggests that Christian ethical conduct is more than a theoretical mind set rather such behaviour is illustrative of the lifestyle of believers on the return Christ. Therefore we should truly live in peace, hope and service.

Much of this comes out when William Loader (www.workingpreacher.org) wrote:

At least Paul in our passage brings to our awareness that the issue of idolatry is far from irrelevant for our times, even if the imminence of the day of the Lord is not. These days the idols... represent powerful vested interests, but from much of Christianity there is little about which they need to be warned.

Paul believes Christians should not be so drowsy and drunk, but be asserting the radical new way of faith and love and hope. His world needed it and so does ours.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Formidable women - based on Judges 4. *“Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm tree (which became named the “Palm of Deborah”) between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the people of Israel came to her for judgement....*

Today I wish to speak about formidable women. Deborah was a formidable woman.

Scroll down...

<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocA/63Sun33.htm>

Deborah illustrates her many roles in our scriptural passage. James Limburg in

<http://www.workingpreacher.org/> takes up the story

Matthew 25: 14-30 - The God of the Bible is right into taking risks. That's obvious, isn't it? Otherwise we human beings, such unstable creatures, would not have been left in a management position on this precious planet.

Scroll down...

<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocA/63Sun33.htm>

CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](#), Proper 28, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown, 2011.

Scroll down for talk on the reading from Matthew

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/year-proper-28-33rd-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

["Sermon of the Week,"](#) / ["Mensajes para ninos,"](#) Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.

[Faith Formation Journeys](#), Children Sermon, 2011.

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Brother, Sister

Here I am Lord
Lord for the years
The Servant King
When out of poverty born
Focus my eyes on you

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title