



## Morning Worship

December 2020

## Generosity

OPENING PRAYER:

**Almighty God,  
grant us to perfectly know thy Son Jesus Christ  
as the way, the truth and the life.  
Following in the footsteps of your servant Nicholas,  
who loved the poor, the weak and the young,  
and who gave generously what he had to enrich those who had but little;  
may we faithfully walk in the way that leads to eternal life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

FIRST READING: Hebrews 13:16-21 (New English Translation)

<sup>16</sup> And do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for God is pleased with such sacrifices. <sup>17</sup> Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls and will give an account for their work. Let them do this with joy and not with complaints, for this would be no advantage for you. <sup>18</sup> Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to conduct ourselves rightly in every respect. <sup>19</sup> I especially ask you to pray that I may be restored to you very soon. <sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace who by the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, <sup>21</sup> equip you with every good thing to do his will, working in us what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

TODAY IS ST NICHOLAS DAY – A CELEBRATION OF GENEROSITY

St Nicholas was reported to have been born in the year 280 AD, in the village of Patara, which was then part of Greece but is now in the Southern part of Turkey, and sadly, he became an

orphan quite young in his life as his parents both died from an epidemic that was sweeping the region. Obeying God's words to "sell what you own and give to the poor" Nicholas used his whole inheritance to help the needy, the sick and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and he was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man.

St Nicholas, along with many of Christians at that time, suffered for his faith and during the Great Persecution in 303 AD, he was imprisoned with many fellow churchmen. When the Emperor Constantine came to power, he ended the persecution in 313 AD and St Nicholas, along with many other Christians, was released from prison. St Nicholas continued to spread the word of God and helped people as much as he could, before his death on 6th December 343 AD.

St Nicholas is still so much a part of our lives, not just because he is whom our church is named after, and dedicated to, but because of his life and story – his generosity and love of children – which we remember especially at this time of year.

SECOND READING: Isaiah 6:1-8 (New English Translation).

<sup>1</sup> In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord seated on a high, elevated throne. The hem of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Seraphs stood over him; each one had six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and they used the remaining two to fly. <sup>3</sup> They called out to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven's Armies! His majestic splendour fills the entire earth!" <sup>4</sup> The sound of their voices shook the door frames, and the temple was filled with smoke.

<sup>5</sup> I said, "Woe to me! I am destroyed, for my lips are contaminated by sin, and I live among people whose lips are contaminated by sin. My eyes have seen the king, the Lord of Heaven's Armies." <sup>6</sup> But then one of the seraphs flew toward me. In his hand was a hot coal he had taken from the altar with tongs. <sup>7</sup> He touched my mouth with it and said, "Look, this coal has touched your lips. Your evil is removed; your sin is forgiven." <sup>8</sup> I heard the voice of the Lord say, "Whom will I send? Who will go on our behalf?" I answered, "Here I am, send me!"

TODAY IS THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

**Lord Jesus, light of the world,  
the prophets said you would bring peace  
and save your people in trouble.  
Give peace in our hearts at Christmas  
and show all the world God's love.  
Amen.**

### THIRD READING: Isaiah 40:1-11 (New English Translation)

“Comfort, O comfort my people”, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.”

### REFLECTION

The theme of our service today is generosity. Generosity is central to the life of Saint Nicholas. When we celebrate Saint Nicholas Day we are celebrating goodness, sharing and generosity. We are also celebrating being faithful despite the difficulties of life and being a witness to God’s work through a life of committed to others and our communities sharing God’s love through the work we do.

Through St Nicolas we can recognise that no matter how ordinary we may be, he is a model that we can follow in our lives - especially as we approached Christmas. The readings from Hebrews and Isaiah point to this message.

As we make our way through Advent we prepare ourselves spiritually for Christmas which is the season of generosity. A celebration of the generosity of the love of God represented by the birth and life of Jesus.

St. Nicholas reminds us that generosity of ordinary people – through their gifts of money, time and love - is a witness to God’s love. Christmas is a celebration of God coming amongst the ordinariness of us, coming to reach into the parts of our society that are like the wilderness the

prophets spoke of, to the people in need, to those who are hungry and homeless. And in the midst of all this God reminds us of our capacity to be generous. Through the life and example of St Nicholas, God says to each one of us, 'You are my children. I love you. Share my love. Serve my people.'

#### LORDS PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.  
Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.  
Now and for ever. Amen**

#### CLOSING PRAYER:

**Lord God,  
as you led St. Nicholas to feed your sheep by his word,  
and guide them by his example,  
give us grace to keep the faith which he taught,  
and to follow in his footsteps:  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

#### THE GRACE

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
And the love of God,  
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore.  
Amen.**