

Christ Church, Ipswich
Sunday 15th December 2024 10.45 am
Family Worship for the Third Sunday of Advent
 Minister: Revd Neil Coulson
 Organist: Mr Stephen Hogger

Hello, I hope you are well. This morning, our children will be making Christingles in Junior Church and returning later on in the service to share them with us and we'll all join together in singing a Christingle Hymn.

Let us worship God together:

A prayer of approach as we light our Third Advent Candle

As we light this third Advent candle,
 may its flame be for us a sign of the light
 that reveals to us our path through life,
 that inspires us to live simply and generously,
 after the example and call of John the Baptist,
 that we ourselves may be signs of the good news we proclaim.
 In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

A Gathering Prayer

O Lord our God,
 God of the prophets and God of the now,
 you are with us.
 Your power gives us victory.
 You take delight in us.
 And in love, you give us new life.
 Hear us as we come to you today. **Amen.**

BPW 149 There's a light upon the mountains

1 There's a light upon the mountains,
 and the day is at the spring,
 when our eyes shall see the beauty
 and the glory of the King;
 weary was our heart with waiting,
 and the night-watch seemed so long,
 but His triumph-day is breaking,
 and we hail it with a song.

2 There's a hush of expectation,
 and a quiet in the air;
 and the breath of God is moving
 in the fervent breath of prayer;
 for the suffering, dying Jesus
 is the Christ upon the throne,
 and the travail of our spirits
 is the travail of His own.

3 He is breaking down the barriers,
 He is casting up the way;
 He is calling for His angels
 to build up the gates of day;
 but His angels here are human,
 not the shining hosts above,
 For the drum-beats of His army
 are the heart-beats of our love.

4 Hark! we hear a distant music,
 and it comes with fuller swell;
 it's the triumph song of Jesus,
 of our King Immanuel;
 Zion, go ye forth to meet Him,
 and my soul, be swift to bring
 all thy sweetest and thy dearest
 for the triumph of our King.

Henry Burton (1840-1930)

The children go to Junior Church with our love and blessing to make Christingles

Prayers of Adoration, Confession and an Assurance of Forgiveness

Living God, in this season of Advent, we wait on you.

We are expectant, getting ready.

We are looking for something special.

Help us, as we look and listen for what you are doing and what you want to say to us,
to see those moments of incarnational joy that contribute to a transformed world.

Accept our offering of worship.

May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

Open our eyes that we may see the great things that you are doing.

Loving God, forgive our frequently shabby response to your love.

Forgive our failing to be your people,

living and loving in the way that you have called us to walk.

Remind us to live out our baptism.

Remind us that we are forgiven people.

Remind us that we are called to be your people.

So, help us to leave behind all those things that take us in wrong directions

and rather to shine as your light, to offer influence for good, just as salt makes food tasty.

We ask it for your love's sake. Amen.

The Good News is that we are forgiven.

The promise is that in Christ all things are made new.

God's love is freely given.

And it's abundantly generous.

You are invited to make the words of the Psalmist your own words offered to God:

I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;

and your house will be my home as long as I live.

A Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving

Jesus, son of God and son of Mary,

you came among us, baptizing with fire and light,

calling us to the true vocation of humanity:

to reflect the glory of our creator.

We thank you for your work among us,

how you gathered, how you spoke,

how you ate and drank, how you left us your Spirit

to lift us up and hold us in the light.

We praise you, because you came to us,

and keep coming to us,

because of your great love. **Amen.**

BPW 311 Hills of the North, rejoice

1 Hills of the North, rejoice,
river and mountain-spring,
hark to the advent voice;
valley and lowland, sing.
Christ comes in righteousness and love,
he brings salvation from above.

2 Isles of the Southern seas,
sing to the listening earth,
carry on every breeze
hope of a world's new birth:
in Christ shall all be made anew,
his word is sure, his promise true.

3 Lands of the east, arise,
he is your brightest morn,
greet him with joyous eyes,
praise shall his path adorn:
your seers have longed to know their Lord;
to you he comes, the final word.

4 Shores of the utmost west,
lands of the setting sun,
welcome the heavenly guest
in whom the dawn has come:
he brings a never-ending light
who triumphed o'er our darkest night.

5 Shout, as you journey home,
songs be in every mouth!
Lo, from the north they come,
from east and west and south:
in Jesus all shall find their rest,
in him the universe be blest.

Charles E. Oakley (1832-65)
Editors of *English Praise*, 1975, altd.

Old Testament Reading Zephaniah 3:14-20**(OT page 800)*****A Song of Joy***

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
¹⁵ The Lord has taken away the judgements against
you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.
¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.
¹⁷ The Lord, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing
¹⁸ as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.
¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
²⁰ At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the Lord.

Epistle Reading Philipians 4:4-7**(NT page 190)**

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Gospel Reading Luke 3:7-18 (NT page 55)

⁷ John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' ⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' ¹¹ In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' ¹² Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' ¹³ He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.'

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,^[a] ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with^[b] the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

BPW 537 May the mind of Christ my Saviour

1 May the mind of Christ my Saviour
live in me from day to day,
by His love and power controlling
all I do and say.

2 May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through His power.

3 May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.

4 May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing,
this is victory.

5 May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus,
as I onward go.

6 May his beauty rest upon me
as I seek to make him known,
so that all may look to Jesus,
seeing him alone.

Kate B. Wilkinson (1859-1928)

A reflection on today's readings

A moment for personal reflection as we listen to some music

R&S 661 How shall I sing that majesty

1 How shall I sing that majesty
which angels do admire?
Let dust in dust and silence lie;
sing, sing, ye heavenly choir.
Thousands of thousands stand around
thy throne, O God most high;
ten thousand times ten thousand sound
thy praise; but who am I?

2 Thy brightness unto them appears,
while I thy footsteps trace;
a sound of God comes to my ears;
but they behold thy face:
I shall, I fear, be dark and cold,
with all my fire and light;
yet when thou dost accept their gold,
Lord, treasure up my mite.

3 Enlighten with faith's light my heart,
in flame it with love's fire,
then shall I sing and take my part
with that celestial choir.
They sing, because thou art their Sun;
Lord, send a beam on me;
for where heaven is but once begun,
there alleluia be.

4 How great a being, Lord, is thine,
which doth all beings keep!
Thy knowledge is the only line
to sound so vast a deep:
thou art a sea without a shore,
a sun without a sphere;
thy time is now and evermore,
thy place is everywhere.

John Mason (1646-94)*

Our prayers of intercession

Heavenly Father, we pray today for your Church here and everywhere as we seek to do outreach. We pray for a hospitable spirit to welcome people coming through our doors during this sparkling season of Advent, and to encourage them to stay when the trappings of Christmas have been tidied away. We pray for those involved in outreach in local communities, going where the need is, living the Gospel message in generous and practical ways; remembering always that Christ gave of himself every day, and that with the joy given by God comes the responsibility to share it.

In the midst of our rejoicing, we remember that your Good News comes with responsibility.

Lord, we have witnessed the restoration of that great cathedral in Paris, Notre Dame, and it reminds us of our need to be renewed and restored. As you restored your people in the days of Zephaniah and brought them home, so remind us of our spiritual home in you; and as John the Baptist foretold the coming of Christ, the Messiah for all peoples, so may we be renewed and restored in order to share in the unfolding of his Good News to the world.

In the midst of our rejoicing, we remember that your Good News comes with responsibility.

Father, we pray today for those whose hearts are heavy as we prepare to celebrate the joyful news of Jesus' birth. We think of those who are sick in hospital or at home, and for all who have been bereaved; we ask a blessing of peace upon them, and guidance from your Holy Spirit as to how best we might reach out in empathy and love. We remember also those who continue to experience the effects of recent storms long after the news coverage has ceased, and we ask how your Church might offer help and support.

In the midst of our rejoicing, we remember that your Good News comes with responsibility.

Lord, as we gaze at romantic depictions of Bethlehem on our Christmas cards, we remember the truth : that the Holy Family were homeless that night, and soon became refugees; that Jesus was born in an occupied country which was a tinder box. So, Father, as we have seen the overturn of the ruling regime in Syria this week, we pray for the Middle East and its complex conflicts – let there be stability, Lord, and peace among Christians, Jews and Muslims. We pray for peaceful solutions to be found in other conflicts around the world, too, and for all leaders who profess faith to remember their responsibilities to the teachings of their religions.

In the midst of our rejoicing, we remember that your Good News comes with responsibility.

May we all, using the various gifts given us, discharge our responsibility to share the gospel tidings; in Jesus' name, and for his sake, Amen

The Lord's Prayer

- We sing the Lord's Prayer together

Junior Church return with Christingles

Christingle Hymn *We'll kindle a flame*

Tune: Light up the fire (Colours of day R&S 572)

1 Jesus, you're coming, bringing the love
that draws the earth near to heaven above,
we'll wait as the darkness covers the earth,
and long for the joy of remembering your birth.

*We'll kindle a flame to shine through the night,
living our lives to shine with your light,
and sharing your love in all that we do,
your wonderful story is our story too.*

2 Fruit of the seasons, blessings to share,
this wondrous creation placed in our care,
the city and forest, ocean and land,
the whole world is treasured in God's gentle hand.

*We'll kindle a flame to shine through the night,
living our lives to shine with your light,
and sharing your love in all that we do,
your wonderful story is our story too.*

3 Love like a circle, love never ends,
the love of a God who calls us your friends,
a love without price, a free gift of grace,
that holds all the world in a heavenly embrace.

*We'll kindle a flame to shine through the night,
living our lives to shine with your light,
and sharing your love in all that we do,
your wonderful story is our story too.*

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Sending out Prayer

Lord, help us to go into the world in peace;
to be of good courage;
to hold fast to that which is good;
to strengthen the fainthearted;
to support the weak;
to honour everyone;
and to love and serve the Lord.
Be within us and among us,
and remain with us always. **Amen.**

The Blessing

Look forward in hope
to the coming of your Saviour,
prepare the way for Christ your Lord;
welcome him with love and faith
when he comes in glory.

And may the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and those we love,
this day and always. **Amen.**

The Grace

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