



“Covid Carol Service 2020 ”

Sunday 13th December 2020

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This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use as you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.



3rd Sunday of Advent

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;

Those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

Week by week, the light grows stronger and brighter, as we anticipate the coming Christ. The candles of Hope and Preparation are already ablaze.

Today, we light the candle of Joy.
(light candle)

We excitedly anticipate the coming of the Mighty One. The promise of healing, comfort, liberty, and freedom is good news that is meant to be shared.

Rejoicing in the mercy and justice of our Lord, we kindle this flame. Together, we lift our hearts and voices in songs of joy.

Hymn STF 215 v.3 See, amid the winter's snow

Say, ye holy shepherds, say
What your joyful news today
Wherefore have ye left your sheep
On the lonely mountain steep?



*Hail! Thou ever-blessed morn!
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."* Edward Caswall (1858)

Reading Isaiah 11:1-9 – The peace that Christ will bring is foretold.

Prayers of adoration

Lord we have come to praise you
As we sing our carols and listen again to the story of the first Christmas
We have come to remember Mary and Joseph,
The angels and the shepherds, the wise men and the star and the baby in the manger.
We rejoice in this time of good news and good will,
We celebrate the birth of your Son who is;

The Prince of Peace

The Lord of Lords

The Word coming to live with us.

We praise you that when all our preparation, waiting and celebrating is over, the love you promise for us through the birth of this baby, will continue forever.

We praise you that when we feel lost and overwhelmed with all our preparations and busyness, you come to find us.

When we feel alone, you have promised to be with us.

When we are sad, you share our tears.

When we are hurting inside, you are there hurting with us.

When we are excited you rejoice with us.

When we feel lost you show us the way

Lord we have come to praise and thank you for Jesus

because without him there would be no Christmas at all

Help us to keep Him at the centre of our Christmas, knowing that we are at the heart of his love. Amen.

Hymn StF 330 Joy to the world

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Isaac Watts(1674 - 1748)

Reading Luke 1:26-2:7 The birth of Jesus

Hymn StF 193 Born in the night

Born in the night,
Mary's Child,
a long way from your home;
coming in need,
Mary's Child,
born in a borrowed room.

Clear shining light,
Mary's Child,
your face lights up our way;
light of the world,
Mary's Child,
dawn on our darkened day.

Truth of our life,
Mary's Child,
you tell us God is good;
prove it is true,
Mary's Child,
go to your cross of wood.

Hope of the world,
Mary's Child,
you're coming soon to reign;
King of the earth,
Mary's Child,
walk in our streets again.

Geoffrey Ainger (1925-)

Reading Luke 2:8-16 – Visitation of the shepherds

Hymn 221 StF While shepherds watched

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down
and glory shone around.

'Fear not,' said he - for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind -
'Glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and all mankind:

'To you in David's town this day
is born of David's line
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.
And this shall be the sign:

'The heavenly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands
and in a manger laid.'

Thus spoke the seraph, and forthwith
appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God, who thus
addressed their joyful song:

'All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
goodwill henceforth from highest heaven
begin and never cease!'

Nahum Tate (1652-1715)

Reading Matthew 2:1-12 – Visit of the Magi

Hymn 204 In the bleak mid winter

In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air,
But only His mother
In her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the Beloved
With a kiss.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man
I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give Him,
Give my heart.



Christina Rossetti (1830 - 1894)

Short Talk

During Advent, we are told about the long journey under difficult conditions, of Mary and Joseph. We are told about the wondrous story of Angels, Shepherds and Wise Men. We are told about the birth of Jesus in a lowly stable. In Matthew, Mark and Luke they tell us this story about the journey and the eventual birth of a baby. But, the Christmas story did not begin with Mary and Joseph, it did not begin with an angel appearing to Mary, or even with the prophets who foretold of the birth of Jesus many hundreds of years earlier.

The Christmas story began with God looking down on his own creation and seeing what needed to be done to help the world. In John's version of the Christmas story we are told that Jesus is not only God come to earth, he is also the God-Who-Is-Word from the very beginning of time. The Word that was always there. The Word that caused the world to be created. The story from John's Gospel is God's story and it connects us all the way back to Genesis 1:1-3 which says: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light."

The message that the angels announced, that the shepherd's heard, that the wise men sought, that Herod feared, that Mary cradled, that Joseph admired, that the world did not even notice was "the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." Grace is the essence of Christmas and is at the heart of the Christmas story, and helps us to understand the shepherds and angels and all the rest of the Christmas accounts. Grace, something we think of as intangible and invisible, has become tangible, literally touchable, certainly visible, in the coming of the Christ child. The true gift of Christmas is not what is under our trees, not what we receive or give to others but is found wrapped in cloths, in a lowly stable, born in Bethlehem. It is a gift that is personal. A gift that is costly. A gift that has no price tag. The true gift of Christmas is "The Word who became flesh and made his dwelling among us." As Jesus is born, God's grace intrudes upon the world and even there, on that first night, God's grace is celebrated, not by the rich and powerful and religious, but by the outcast shepherds, the lowly, the ordinary, the unlikely.

God's grace is bringing salvation, the child lying in the manger is the Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. The angels praise God by saying 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!' This gift of Grace, infuses our life in the same way that light diffuses darkness.



It does not just appear to cancel darkness, but rather it redeems it and disperses it and that is what grace does for us. It enters into our life and transforms us. It is this grace that we hold onto now as we move towards Christmas, not in the usual fanfare of celebration in restaurants and pubs, noise and sparkles of nativity plays, Carol Services with loud, even off key singing in our Churches, filling our hearts with love and joy and our

stomachs with mince pies and coffee and tea afterwards.

Grace is what holds us together, even when we are apart. Grace, allows us to feel connected even when we can not celebrate in the usual ways. Grace fills us up even when we sit alone isolated and struggling separated from loved ones. Grace is the power that enlightens, trains, disciplines, guides, and leads us. It does not force us into anything, but encourages us, counsels us, comforts us, moves us, and convicts us. Grace is the wonderful light filled gift that comes to us even in a world that seems dark and frightening and off kilter. Jesus is God's gift of grace. He demonstrates God's vision, God's dream, God's intention for all creation. Jesus reveals what God wants to say to us, but that words can't express. This is a gift that comes with an expectation. God wants us to receive it with thanksgiving and wants us to be transformed into Christ's image. We can still celebrate as we look forward to the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, because on that first Christmas, when the gift of grace from God was given, when God showered us with his undeserved favour, humanity was forever changed and lifted up. That's why grace is so amazing.

I would like to share with you something entitled 'Where the Light begins' by Jan Richardson and it goes like this:

Perhaps it does not begin.

Perhaps it is always.

Perhaps it takes a lifetime to open our eyes, to learn to see what has forever shimmered in front of us, the luminous line of the map in the dark, the vigil flame in the house of the heart, the love so searing we cannot keep from singing, from crying out in testimony and praise.

Perhaps this day will be the mountain over which the dawn breaks.

Perhaps we will turn our face toward it, toward what has been always.

Perhaps our eyes will finally open in ancient recognition, willingly dazzled, illuminated at last.

Perhaps this day the light begins in us.

When people want to know what the Christmas story is about, don't just share the Nativity story, share the first few verses of John's Gospel too. They are powerful wonderful words and they teach us the story of an eternal God, who graciously and humbly gave us the greatest gift of all. The gift of His presence. For, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. Amen.

Reading John 1:1-14 – The Prologue

Prayers of intercession

Think of someone you know who will be on their own this Christmas.

We pray for God's peace to be with them.

Think of someone you know who has lost their job and will be facing an uncertain Christmas.

We pray for God's peace to be with them.

Think of someone you know who will be celebrating the 'season' but have no concept of the birth of Jesus.

We pray they will find the Christ child.

Think of someone you know whose days are filled with sadness and pain

We pray they might really know they love of Christmas.

We bring our prayers in the name of the one who was, is and always is. His name is Jesus. Amen.

Think of those around the world whose Christmas will be filled with hatred and war

We pray that the Prince of Peace will bring peace.

Think of those who will be sleeping rough this Christmas and the people who are without a home or security.

May the saviour who also had nowhere to be born give them security and comfort.

Think of all those who are close to your heart

May God answer their prayers.

Think of yourself and all that you are facing in the coming week: Remember that that Jesus has come.

We ask our prayers in the name of the King of Kings and the Lord. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 212 O come all ye faithful

O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
Oh come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him born the King of angels;
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

True God of true God, Light of Light eternal,
Lo he abhors not the virgin's womb;
Son of the Father, begotten, not created:
O come let us adore him Christ The Lord.

See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh with to gaze;
We too will thither, bend our joyful footsteps;
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;

Glory to God, in the highest:

O come, let us adore him, Christ The Lord.

John Francis Wade (c 1711 - 1786)

Blessing

