

Sunday Service for 20th December 2020

Call to Worship

In times past there was a message given of God being near. - "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God with us." - And today we still have the promise of God being near and his promise is the same today as it was so long ago. as we wait the coming of his anointed son who will bring joy to the world and to take away the sins of the world. God is with us Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. Amen.

Hymn 493 O come O Come Emanuel.

Prayer and Lord's prayer. God of all love, our hearts await your coming, as we offer to you our prayers and songs Draw us to you we offer ourselves to you in hope and we praise you for your never-failing love to the world. We come, O God, with adoration and praise, as well as thanksgiving, to you. Our anticipation grows as we come nearer to the day of great celebration of the birth of your Christ. Open our hearts that we may truly receive the gift of your Son, and know that the joy of life with you. God our redeemer, who chose Mary to be the mother of this so special baby help us to be ready to welcome Jesus as our saviour when he comes again. This we pray through our Lord Jesus Christ (who taught us to pray, "Our Father...")

Candle lighting CH4 282

Christmas is coming the church is glad to sing
and let the advent candles brightly burn in a ring.

The first is for God's promise to put wrong things right,
and bring to earth's darkness the hope of love and light.

The second for the Prophets, who said that Christ would come
with good news for many and angry words for some.

The third is for the Baptist, who cried "Prepare the way"

be ready for Jesus, today and every day.

The fourth is for the virgin, who mothered God's own son
and sang how God's justice was meant for everyone.

At last we light the candle we kept new for Christmas day
this to shine bright for Jesus, new-born here to stay.

Christ is among us the candles in the ring
remind us that our saviour will light up everything.

Hymn 337 In the Bleak midwinter

Reading Psalm 89 1-4

¹ I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. ² I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself. ³ You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, ⁴ 'I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.'"

Intercession prayers Lord God, we join our prayers to those of Mary, your faithful servant and mother of our lord, to proclaim your greatness, and sing in gratitude for all your wonderful gifts given to us, be with us as we focus on the coming of your kingdom and the gift of your son this Christmas we pray that those in power would use their power wisely and compassionately so that, the hungry be fed and equality be established between rich and poor. Lord we ask you to show your mercy on all who are sick, fearful or in mourning and especially we pray for those members of our church, families and friends we especially pray for John and the family at home and in Switzerland in the sudden loss of his sister in law, a loving wife, mother, aunt, daughter and daughter in law be with father as they come to terms with this enfold them all in your loving care. Heavenly Father, you sent to earth the gift of your son Jesus Christ that in your power and love we might also have the gift of eternal life; bless those whom we love that have departed this life with the gifts of your all-

encompassing love and life eternal. Heavenly Father, who chose Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour: fill us with your grace, that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; send us out to finish our Advent journey filled with love and joy and peace ready to receive that promise afresh into our lives.

Hymn 631 Tell out my soul

Reading Luke 1 26 -38. The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." ³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail." ³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Sermon

How many homes are delivery drivers going to at this time. There must be thousands of deliveries of one kind or another arriving at doors. They just knock and stand back for you to pick it up. Well we do know that angels do not ring a bell and wait they can appear anywhere. How would you feel if you had an angel appear without any forewarning behind you? Even now knowing the story of the angel Gabriel coming to Mary I can only think panic would certainly be my first instinct. They do say fight or flight well I would be flying as fast as I could away from said angel. It would have to

be able to catch me to tell me what the message was. In my eyes Mary was extremely brave by staying still even though she must have been in a state of fear and alarm and wondering how this angel had appeared before her. She most certainly had a very strong trust in God to be prepared to listen to the Angel Gabriel.

Even though she was bemused and mystified she only questions "How can this be?" the management of what was being asked of her would be huge. To have such trust in God was amazing after all she would be a single mother it would affect her relationship with Joseph who she was engaged to be married to. Luke gives an illustration of Mary's trust as a true discipleship and faithfulness. Gabriel is not asking Mary, to be the mother of Jesus Mary is being told that God has chosen her and to have a belief so strong as to believe in something that to us is not possible. Mary has to believe that all will be okay. To trust in the covenant that God had made many years before that he would be with us always and to trust in him to do the right thing. As was Elizabeth trusting God that she too would have a baby in her older age.

Coming back to today we are also facing a question of trust. Do we have this vaccine when offered it do we trust the scientists enough to have faith in their vaccine? Are we going to put our faith in God that he will be with us? Is this our angel Gabriel bringing hope to the world will we wonder like Mary did how can this be? We can only have the strong trust that the right way will be given to us.

Just like us Mary would be really worried about what will happen to her she has been favoured by God or held in a high regard and everything in her life is turned right around. Again it's just like us throughout this past year. We have been left totally baffled and confused on what we are really supposed to be doing at any one time so many different rules within so many different regions it's no wonder we are at sixes and sevens. We must be feeling that we are all in an impossible time right now. Maybe it is time to look for the Angel coming to stand beside us and feel that God is there – right there beside us walking with us carrying us if necessary. Not worrying about what comes next we must put our trust in God and like Mary have the full faithfulness and discipleship to carry us through and to remember trusting in the covenant of Jesus Christ our Saviour that with God nothing is impossible. God is Love the care and as in the advent Ring we wait in anticipation for the hope peace,

joy and love in Christ Jesus returning to bring peace and joy to the world. God's love is coming fully into the world and we see love made in human flesh. Are we ready to receive him? Are we ready for such a perfect love? Amen.

Hymn 451 Love came down at Christmas

Benediction

Go into the world. Speak the good news of Jesus and respond to the messengers that God may send, that the fulfilment of his perfect plans may draw nearer in our lives. And may the Love of God be with you all now and forever amen. **Amen.**