

Salendine Nook Baptist Church
Sunday 3rd January 2021 ~ Frist Sunday of 2021

Call to Worship ~ Psalm 147:12-20

¹² Extol the Lord, Jerusalem; praise your God, Zion. ¹³ He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your people within you. ¹⁴ He grants peace to your borders and satisfies you with the finest of wheat. ¹⁵ He sends his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. ¹⁶ He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes. ¹⁷ He hurls down his hail like pebbles. Who can withstand his icy blast? ¹⁸ He sends his word and melts them; he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow. ¹⁹ He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. ²⁰ He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws.
Praise the Lord.

Hymn ~ As with Gladness Men of Old ~ (BPW 189)

Prayer of Thanksgiving & confession

Loving Lord Jesus we thank you that we as your people are able to gather with you today. we thank you for the opportunities that you have given us over the last few days and weeks to celebrate with you and to praise your name. We thank you heavenly father for the Advent Journey that we together have travelled with you. Thank you for being at our side through this time we pray that you will continue to be so in the days and weeks ahead as we embark on a new year with that same excitement and anticipation. We thank you for the gift of Your Son Jesus Christ who is with us always shining his light on our darkness. As we leave 2020 behind and look forward to 2021, we thank you for the opportunities we have had to show your love to others and for the new and different ways that we have been able to worship in these different times. So, Lord as we move in to 2021 help us not to forget all that we have learned and what we have been told in 2020, help us to understand and help us to put our faith and trust in you as we journey together with Hope and Thanksgiving. So, Lord as always, we come knowing that we have done wrong and come to say sorry for those times when as your people we could have done better. Help us Lord in the days and weeks ahead to put that right. So, at the dawn of a New Year we place ourselves into your care asking that you lead us where you want us to go as your people here at Salendine Nook. As we say together

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn ~ We'll walk the lands with hearts on fire.

1. We'll walk the land with hearts on fire; and every step will be a prayer. Hope is rising, new day dawning; sound of singing fills the air.
2. Two thousand years, and still the flame is burning bright across the land. Hearts are waiting longing, aching for awakening once again.

Chorus

Let the flame burn brighter in the heart of the darkness, turning night to glorious day. Let the song grow louder as our love grows stronger; Let it shine, let it shine!

3. We'll walk for truth speak out for love; in Jesus' name we shall be strong, to lift the fallen, to save the children, to fill the nation with Your song

Let the Flame

Reading ~ John 1 ~ 1 to 18 ~ The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace

and truth came through Jesus Christ.¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Reflection

The first Sunday of a New Year, who would believe how fast time is going. It's a time for a new beginning, a fresh start. Yippee you are thinking at last; we can move on to something else other than Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. We can change topic and think about something else for a change? He won't be asking endless questions about being excited and getting ready and being prepared. We can make a fresh start and look at something new. Right? Yes? No Wrong because at the heart of all our teaching and all our understanding are the 4 candles, there I have said it, you have been waiting for me to say it all Christmas I know. The four candles that remind us of Hope, Love, Joy and Peace with Christ at the centre. And with this in mind I hope that as we journey together through 2021, however that might be. We will keep these 4 things as our focus in all that we do and in all that we say both as individuals and as a Church. As we help one another through what will be another tough and difficult year, but a year that will be exciting and will bring us opportunities, a chance to hopefully regain a little bit of normality that we all long for.

We are all looking for that little bit of familiarity aren't we. And this passage from John's Gospel is just that as it is so well known. It is one that we hear almost every Christmas and as we have said before because of its familiarity its depth can often be lost on us. I have to be honest I find this a really difficult reading to read. I always hoped that it wouldn't be my turn to read this at the Carol service and for those who are in church this morning I will probably have made a real hash of reading it today. The reading talks about many different things and it can be interpreted in many different ways.

Verses 4-5 talk about light, the light that brings mankind out of darkness. It says

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

This is what we have been thinking about on our advent journey isn't it. As we have got closer to Bethlehem, we have got ever closer to that light and closer to Jesus. We have been drawn by that light to the Infant King. Through his light and life, he has brought his people out of darkness and into the light. The light that only he can give. The Wise Men were guided by a light, the light of the star that shone bright over the stable in Bethlehem. It guided them to the Baby Jesus eventually. But their journey was not without problems and temptations. Just like our journey and our lives are today. As we know on their way, they encountered Herod. A great man in his own right who was known for many things both good and bad. He tried to trick the Wise Men didn't he in to telling him where he could find Jesus so he could go and worship him also. You see Herod was frightened. He was frightened of the threat Jesus posed to his own greatness, to his rule over the land. He didn't want to appear weak, did he? especially not to a baby. He was a great man, and it would be unthinkable for him to be overthrown for want of a better phrase by a child. That's why he wanted to know where Jesus was so he could make him 'disappear' and his rule would not be threatened. But as we know the Wise Men didn't disclose Jesus whereabouts so Herod took more drastic action.

And as we move on in the passage this is exactly what verse 11 is talking about. That insecurity, that fear and that uncertainty felt by many at the time of who Jesus actually was.

"He came to his own, and his own people did not accept him".

At that first Christmas, the word became flesh. God walked among us, full of grace and truth. We are told, but was he accepted? Sadly, not. As we know that drastic action Herod took was to have all children under 2 killed so that he would be safe. People were frightened, people were unsure, people felt threatened by the Infant King. So much so that they would go to any length to protect themselves rather than accept him. The Christmas story you see is sadly the story of the unwelcome Christ.

"He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him."

As we come to Salendine Nook Baptist Church this morning we do so having only a few days ago celebrated the joy of the Christmas story. The excitement the anticipation the expectancy of what was happening and what will happen. So, I suppose the question before us this morning is whether we will accept him and welcome him into our lives? You see welcoming Christ into the world, into the church, into our lives, is what Christmas is all about. Welcoming Christ is actually at the heart of the Christmas story. We can sometimes get so excited that we miss what the Bible really says, and we don't look carefully enough at the story and as a result we are in danger of missing the point.

We spoke on Christmas Day about the shepherds and the Innkeeper and all those who were there that first Christmas night. How many of us remember that? How many of us remember the innkeeper in the story? The one who is always portrayed as grumpy? The one who owned the inn where Mary and Joseph were turned away? Well of course we don't, because he didn't turn them away did he, he helped them. You see hospitality was very important and that would not have happened in those days, people would be welcomed not turned away. You see offering hospitality was very important to the people back then. It is a sign of Godliness, compassion, care and Love for mankind, all the things that Jesus came to earth to give to us. We spoke

didn't we about who saw Jesus first, the Inn Keeper, the Shepherds, Mary and Joseph and the Animals all of humble occupations and status. People like you and me.

You see from the very beginning Jesus was fighting an up-hill battle to be accepted as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. People were too preoccupied with what effect it would have on them and their own standing and status if they were to accept him into their lives. They could not accept that he had come to bring Hope, into their troubled world. That he had come to help bring peace into their lives, Love into their hearts and Joy into their relationship with one another. People were frightened then, just as they are now to accept Jesus into their lives. The reading this morning is complicated, well I think so anyway. But in actual fact it's message is quite simple when you think about it. It is saying come and see for yourself. Come and see for yourself what it means to accept Jesus into our lives, come and see what it can mean for you and see what it can mean to others too. I'm sure that many theologians would gasp in horror at the simplicity of that sentence. However, we are just human beings who want to learn, learn more about the love of God and how to share it with others. It is saying that everything that John mentions is ours, it can be ours if we accept Jesus for who he is, for what he promises to us. Just like he accepts us for who we are, for what we promise him!! He accepts us just as we are, and we will celebrate that as we come around the table shortly.

As we move ever closer to Epiphany when we celebrate the time when it is thought the Wise Men arrived in Bethlehem and saw Jesus for the first time, we are reminded that they too brought him gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. And as we sit here in Church this morning, we are reminded that 'Wise Men Seek Him Still' as the image and painting on the organ says. Are we wise men? Are we wise people that yearn for and want to seek him still?

At the beginning of a New Year and as we look at that painting on the organ we are reminded of the past. The past that has brought us to this moment in time. The people that have gone before us and the Gifts and talents that they have offered to the Infant King. The influence they have had on us and other people. The support and encouragement they have all had on our own lives. Many people in many ways have offered their own Gifts to the Lord here at Nook over the many years. And it is through their willingness and through Gods guidance that we as Gods people have arrived at the dawn of 2021. Excited, looking forward with anticipation, and with an openness and willingness to accept Jesus. We have been given an opportunity today. So, as we look at the past and give thanks for all that has gone before us, we look with excitement, with Hope, Love, Joy and Peace to the future, taking with us the gifts that we have been given. The gifts that others were given through God and have passed on to us.

"He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him."

Will that be us? I Hope not. I hope and pray that the question we can ask are.... Yes, you have guested it

Are we excited? Are we Excited for the New Year? Excited for where God may take us together on our journey this year? Are we excited to serve the Lord in what every way he chooses for us? Please Lord let it be so. Wise people Seek him Still? Do we? Amen

Hymn ~Brightest & Best of the sons of the morning ~ (190BPW)

Communion

So, then the Table is set before us let us come and eat together with Joy and thanksgiving in our hearts.

Invitation to the table

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is right that we call to the meaning of this supper. It is a remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ for the sin of the world; an encounter with the risen Lord; a feeding on him in faith; a communion with one another in his body, the Church; and a looking forward to the day when he will come again. Therefore, we need to come in faith, conscious of our weakness, renouncing our sin, humbly putting our trust in Christ, and seeking his grace.

How shall I repay the Lord for all his benefits to me? I will take up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people

Because God so loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.

And he invites us to come to him, all who are weary and burdened, and he will give us rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Paul Writing to the church in Corinth said

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me'. In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me'. For whenever you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes

Prayer of thanksgiving for the bread and wine.

So as Jesus gave thanks, we too will give thanks let us pray.

Loving and gracious Lord we thank you for the opportunity to once again gather around this table. We thank you that we are able to come just as we are to give thanks and to offer our praises to you. And as we do so we come with our gifts and our

talents but also our weaknesses and wrongdoings. So, Lord we give thanks for Bread and the Wine, the symbols of your sacrifice for us your people. So, as we eat and drink together, we remember the sacrifice that you gave to us the gift of your Son Jesus Christ. Lord we ask that you will be with us as we journey together and that as we come to the foot of the Cross now and place ourselves into your care, that you will guide us through the coming days.

Amen

Breaking of Bread

Jesus said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me'

Time of Silence and reflection

Sharing the Cup

In the same way, after supper he took the cup. Jesus said, 'This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, we all drink together with Joy and Thanksgiving reminded that we are one in and through the name of Jesus Christ

Amen

Prayers of intercession

So, Lord as our time together comes to an end, we offer our prayers of intercession to you. At the start of a New Year, let us pray for people everywhere and in every kind of need. There are many people across the world that need our prayer. Some are hungry, some are frightened. Frightened of the situation they find themselves in, some are frightened because of where they live. Some are lonely and feel isolated and afraid. We ask that you will be with all your people at this time. Help us to offer comfort and healing through our prayers and through our actions in the coming days and weeks ahead. As a town and as a country we face uncertain times, but Lord you are with us, you have given us the tools to be prepared, help us to hear your voice and your instructions through the chaos of our lives so we can use them in your name, so that we can be useful people for you.

We pray and give thanks for the wonderful Gift you gave to each and every one of us. Help us to use this gift to discover our own gifts and our purpose that you have given, and in turn be like the Wise Men and offer them to you so we can use them to your glory. We pray for your church across the world, we celebrated Christmas differently this year Lord, but your gift and message was just as powerful and real as always. Help us here at Salendine Nook to spread your Love to this community. May we as your people of faith learn to live in harmony with one another with mutual respect for others as we recognise our similarities and celebrate our differences. May this be the year when we keep our resolutions to be faithful in our Christian lives, to let our love shine forth and to live less for ourselves and more for others.

We pray for all in authority whether this be in this country or overseas. We pray that this year they will govern with wisdom and mercy and have respect for all people who live under their rule. We pray for all those who will be affected by Brexit and the implications it will have on their lives and employment. We pray that they will find comfort and security as the consequences unfold. It will affect many people, many jobs and many families. We pray for those who will be affected. We pray that this will be the year when people who live with war may find peace and those who suffer oppression may find freedom. May lessons be learned by all of us from the mistakes and misfortunes of the past year.

We pray for all who are without faith, hope or love. We pray for those who are sick, depressed or bereaved. We pray for those who are feeling lost, may this be the year they are found and get back on track with themselves. Help them to have confidence in themselves and help them to see that you are with them always. Lord you have given us the greatest gift of all the Gift of your Son. Lord we pray that amidst the chaos of our lives we will hear your call for us this year. Help us to help others, but also to help ourselves. Help ourselves to understand our relationship with you. We pray for all those who care for others as they seek to bring them relief from their suffering, give them the words and encouragement they need. Give them and us the strength and courage to carry on and hope for the future. We pray for all those who were affected by the floods over Christmas and all those who have been affected by natural disasters in this past year. We pray especially for all those known to us who are in special need of our prayers, and we remember them now in a moment of silence.....

Jesus Christ you are the light of the world, a light which no darkness can extinguish. We remember all those who have gone before us, those who through you and your Love have paved the way for us and brought us to this point. We remember them with fondness and thanksgiving. Help us to use their example to prepare ourselves for the future. Help us to prepare ourselves with Hope and excitement for the year ahead, a future with you lighting our path out of the darkness into light.

Merciful Father accept these our prayers for the sake of your Son, our Lord our Saviour and our friend Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn ~Tell Out my Soul, the Greatness of the Lord (391 BPW)

Blessing

Lord Grant us your peace and understanding. Give us wisdom and courage to guide us in the week ahead. Guide us by your light in the darkness, help us through your love to serve you in best way that we can. And may the Blessing of God Almighty, Father Son and Holy Spirit. Be with us all wherever we are

Amen