

Salendine Nook Baptist Church

Sunday 10th January 2021

Call to Worship ~ Psalm 67

¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us ² so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. ³ May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. ⁵ May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁶ The land yields its harvest; God, our God, blesses us. ⁷ May God bless us still, so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

Good Morning, I hope everyone is well. Unfortunately, yet again as you all know we are unable to meet as a congregation in Church due to the 3rd National Lockdown. However, we are still able to meet together through the power of the Holy Spirit which draws us and all his people together.

The Hymns and the reflections this morning have been chosen and written by Peter Fairbank. Thank you, Peter, for putting this together for us.

Hymn ~ Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine ~ 329 BPW

Prayer of Thanksgiving ~ From Baptist Praise & Worship

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and all your people. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for hope of glory. And give us, we pray, such a sense of all your mercies that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in the holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen

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.

Reading ~ Mark 1 1-11 ~ John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, ² as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" ³ "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" ⁴ And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Reflection from Peter Fairbank ~ A Letter's arrived who s it from, is it a message from him?

Good morning, I hope you have all had a nice Christmas. It has been very strange this year in fact a very strange year altogether has it not.

As we gather here today on the second Sunday of the new year 2021, we all hope things will be better for everyone. This is also the first Sunday of Epiphany, the start of a new Church year.

We have opened our presents, read the letters and Christmas cards, eaten too much and hopefully talked to all the people we have not been able to meet in person this time, due to all the restrictions. Communication has been by slow mail as some would call postal letters, it is more likely to be by text, E-mail, Texting, Skype, Facebook, Twitter or some other electronic means of communication. It has never been so easy to speak to others has it, but not face to face and certainly not in person.

There is something very personable about a letter, it is something that you can hold in your hand, knowing that it has been held and written by the person who sent it. The next best thing to seeing them in person.

We are told in the Bible how the Lord our God sends messages to his people, in dreams, on mountains, in temples, in fact by many ways and in many places.

In Kings we are told how God tells Elijah how to evade and defeat the unbelievers who are killing the Lords disciples, and the punishment the Lord brings to his enemies, including famine and drought.

The Lord speaks to Zechariah when he is in the inner temple and he is told that his wife Elizabeth in her old age is going to be with child and bare him a son and he is to be called John. Little did they know that he will become John the Baptist, Baptising people in the name of the Lord.

In Exodus 3 we are told how when Moses was tending his father in laws flock of sheep; "he was the high priest of Midian", that Moses saw a bush that was on fire, but the flames did not consume it, as he approaches the bush God speaks to him telling him to approach the King of Egypt and to demand the people of Israel be released from slavery in Egypt. Moses the shepherd leads the people for forty years to the promise land but does not live to get there.

It is on Christmas day in the fields around Bethlehem, in the quiet of the night whilst shepherds are guarding their flocks from Wolves and Thieves, that the Lord announces Christ birth with the sounds of Herald Angels singing in the night sky. A star would guide the three wise men who had travelled from the east to see the baby Jesus in the stable.

In the 20th century letters brought all sorts of news to people sometimes good news, sometimes bad news. I remember a Lady who had two daughters, and on special days would bring out a small tin, she would open it and take out a small bundle of letters tied with a neat bow which she would carefully untie, taking out a letter she would quietly read it then put it back in its bundle tying them up again with the bow then put them in the tin and take them away. They were from her husband who she had not seen since the war, he had been killed whilst on a commando raid to France in the second world war.

What about the letter that I held up at the beginning, it was in a small brown envelope with a black post mark on the right, the date was faint only December legible on it. On the left was red a rectangle in it, the words "past by censor No. 2535. The girl read it. The letter was headed

"Church Army Recreational Hut or Tent".

It read, Dear sister Susy, Just a few lines to let you know that I received your card thank you very much. I hope you enjoy your Christmas, Yes, we have had a bit of snow and now the frost has set in so you will know that it is bitterly cold, yet still being here is something to be thankful for, and I pity the lads in the trenches, for this is where they catch it. Well, I am sending a card I hope you will like it, sorry I cannot send you both something better, but perhaps this time next year it will be over, I hope so anyway.

I remain

Your loving brother Syd.

The letter came from the battlefields of Belgium, the soldier was my Uncle and Susy was my mother and the war would go on for another four years. But on Christmas day the guns would fall silent and peace would reign for a few hours, friends and enemies would join together and sing songs of praise and carols across no mans land, even a game of football being played together. The day of the Lord Jesus Christs birth would bring peace to all men.

Two cards did arrive one for his mum and one for sister Susy. They were very pretty all embroidered with flowers and flags and one with a cat in a basket. Inside one said: to Susy from your loving brother Syd. His mums read: To Mother, Syd, and printed on it were the words "Far from you, but thinking of you", and then "For the past remembrance, for the present good wishes, for the Future bright hopes."

Today we are fighting our own battles against an invisible enemy "Covid-19" and we are all hoping for brighter hopes for 2021, the hope that the vaccines will put an end to this coronavirus pandemic, and that we will be able to all get together again without any restrictions and have the social life we used to have, and so before you throw those Christmas cards and letters away, remember who sent them and what they mean. Perhaps save one until next year so that it reminds you of the person who sent it and the message it contains, that Christ was born on Christmas day, that God sent his only son to be amongst men to teach them the ways of the Lord God and follow the ways of righteousness and follow the light of the world. Jesus Christ.

And now as we go from the old year into the new, we recall the words of Alfred Lord Tennyson

Ring out wild bells to the wild sky, the flying cloud, the frosty light, the year is dying in the night; Ring out wild bells and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new; ring happy bells across the snow, the year is going let him go; Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out false pride in place and blood, The civic slander and the spite; Ring in the love of truth and right; Ring in the common love of good.

Ring in the valiant man and free, the larger heart, the kindlier hand; Ring out the darkness of the land; Ring in the Christ that is to be.

Amen

I wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year. God be with you and keep you all safe

Hymn ~Lord for the years ~ 535 BPW

Prayers of intercession

Almighty and everlasting God, creator of time and space, hear us as we humbly come before you as we mark the start of another year. We have heard the Christmas story, about how you, Father, came to live among us. As we try to understand what this means in our lives, we pray that you will guide us in our requests for others in our prayers of intercession.

Lord we thank you that you promised the possibility of making a fresh start at any time. Help those who have recently made important decisions in their lives to see them through. Life is full of pressures and challenges that we all face which often pull and push us in many different directions. Give us strength of purpose and faith in you to take decisions seriously, to understand the consequences of our actions for others, as well as ourselves, and, always, to seek your guidance through prayer.

At the start of this new year, we seem to be starting as we finished in another national lockdown. However, we are reminded of our responsibilities as your people to follow the instructions and laws in order to be good disciples. Times are difficult and as we long for what we consider normal times help us to protect others and ourselves so, that we one day will return to the church building to worship and sing our praises to you. We are reminded that the church is not the building, the Church is the people. Help us Lord to work together as your people to stay connected with each other and with you through this difficult time.

We pray for all caught up in conflict. We think of our armed forces and emergency services who each and every day face the uncertainty situations and problems. Father give strength and courage to all peacemakers that they will not be discouraged in the difficult decisions they make. We pray for this, our own, country. We pray for all people facing this New Year without some of the basics in life that we take so much for granted. We think of the homeless, the unemployed, the asylum seeker and the addict. Lord Jesus who became a refugee from the oppression of Herod be with all those who find themselves lost and alone in society. Support all who work and volunteer to bring hope to these people.

We pray for all families and friends. Lord we are all made in your image and face the normal ups and downs of life in many different ways. We remember that Jesus was born, nurtured and grew up in a family which would have known all the emotions that we know in ours. Help us we pray to face the different situations with dignity and love.

We Pray for the world-wide church and pray especially for the local churches and the Baptist family in Huddersfield. We pray for all who minister to the community in whatever way and in whatever role, guide and support them. We Continue to pray for the sick, both at home and in hospital, or hospice. We think of the elderly, the housebound and those in care homes. And we pray for all who care for their needs, both professionally and in the family. Lord Jesus who responded to the people's needs help us to do the same. So again, as we share a moment of silence together, we bring before you those known only to ourselves and name them in our hearts.

And finally, Lord we pray for ourselves. Help us Lord to follow your example in all that we do and say as we journey with you. We place ourselves, this Church and all your People into your loving care, accept these our prayers.

Amen

Hymn ~ Great is thy faithfulness ~ 553BPW

Blessing

Amen