

12th December 2021

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ my God
All the vain things that charm me
most
I sacrifice them to His blood

See from His head, His hands, His
feet
Sorrow and love flow mingled down
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of Nature
mine
That were an offering far too small
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all

Read: Luke 1: 26-38 (as over the page)

Theme: Announcement - a summary of the talk given by Timothy James

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.

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Recently we have been the recipients of many messages, some intended to re-assure us (some not); e.g. messages about the pandemic from Boris, or Chris Witty. Which of these do we trust most? And why do so many people seem not to trust any messages from "official" sources about these issues?

It matters from whom messages come, and on whose behalf. We are more likely to be re-assured if we see the messenger as trustworthy. Consider the BBC during World War 2: so that people would know they could trust what they heard, they allowed the newsreaders for the very first times to give their names – "Here is the news and this is Alvar Liddell reading it". Familiar voices could be trusted to tell the truth, either good or bad.

Gabriel is one of only two messengers of God (angels) named in the Bible (see Daniel 8:16, 9:21, and Luke 1:19, 26). He came to Daniel in the Old Testament, and to Zechariah as well as Mary. We assume that he may have been the angel who spoke to Joseph, and to the shepherds, but we are not told this expressly

The first words of an angel in the Bible are, as often as not, “Do not be afraid!” Presumably, receiving a message from an angel is a potentially frightening experience.

But Gabriel doesn’t start with this – did he think it was unnecessary? Was Mary somehow different? But clearly Mary was afraid – we are told she was “greatly troubled”.

Did Mary have reason to be afraid? When you consider what faced her, perhaps she did! She was going to have a child, but not just any child, and the responsibility alone must have been alarming.

What are we afraid of? Think about what currently frightens you: health (Covid or otherwise), money, work, family? Sometimes our fears are irrational, but often they are quite reasonable – some possibilities may be very bad.

Was the angel right to tell Mary not to fear? Despite the challenges she faced, she was assured that she had found favour with God. This should be a great source of reassurance – despite the challenges, God would be with her through them.

Why is Jesus’ coming the reason we need not be afraid? The assurance of his favour and presence should reassure us. There is nothing we can face alone, but there is nothing we cannot face with him by our side. And he has promised never to forsake us.

How did Mary respond, and how should we? She asked for more reassurance, or at least information, and this was readily given her. And then she expressed her willingness to be of service.

So that should be our response too. We need to say “I am the Lord’s servant. May your will, whatever it is, be fulfilled. You will never bring anything on me that with your help I cannot handle.”

Prayers: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (Philippians 4:4-6)



- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: Third Sunday of Advent: Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**



The Lord's Prayer: *O Lord Jesus Christ who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, COGS, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am, 9.30am & 7pm and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is available the week after the service.

The 'Mission of the Month' is Christians Against Poverty (CAP).

Christmas Services at The Church of the Good Shepherd

Sun. 19th December: Carols by Candlelight at 5 & 7pm
(the 7pm Carol Service will be live-streamed).

Christmas Eve: Crib Service at 4pm and Midnight Service at 11.30pm.

Christmas Day: Christmas Celebration at 9.30am (this service will be live-streamed).

