

Quiet Time Evening Service
Giffnock Orchardhill Church 29 November 2023

Good evening and a very warm welcome to our Quiet Time service coming from Giffnock Orchardhill Parish Church in Glasgow. Whether here in the church or listening online, you are all most welcome. We worship together as part of Christ's family, taking comfort from God's constant presence and sharing this quiet time within the embrace of God's love, joined together by the Spirit of the Risen Lord.

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Let us pray Lord, may you touch us with your presence now as we gather for a few moments of reflection this evening. We come before you, with our own thoughts and feelings, our joys and our anxieties, in the highs and lows of life. As we listen to your word, open our eyes to your presence and open our lives to your grace and majesty. Amen.

Reflection

I know it is hard to believe but the season of Advent is almost upon us. It will begin this Sunday. Advent is the

first season of the Church year, leading up to Christmas and including the four preceding Sundays. It is a period of spiritual preparation in which many Christians make themselves ready for the coming, or birth of the Lord, Jesus Christ. In the weeks leading up to Christmas Day, the Church often uses the lighting of four Advent candles to help us to reflect upon the four themes of Advent: hope, love, joy and peace. For this year's Advent, the Church of Scotland has chosen this passage from the Bible - Luke 2:10, "But the angel said to the shepherds, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.'" It has been calculated that the word 'Hope' has been used between 142 and 184 times in the Bible, depending upon which version you use. And that number is divided almost equally between the Old and the New Testaments. Biblical hope is a term used to describe the confident expectation of what God has promised to us in the Bible. Our hope rests upon the sure expectation that God, who sent his beloved son Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for our sins, will be with us both now in the present and for all of eternity.

And so this evening let us read two short passages from the Bible, reflecting upon the theme of Hope. We begin with the Old Testament Book of Isaiah 40: 27-31.

Why do you say, O Jacob, And speak, O Israel:
"My way is hidden from the Lord,
And my just claim is passed over by my God"?

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the weak,
And to *those who have* no might,
He increases strength.
Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,
But those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew *their* strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

And from the New Testament, let us place the Church of Scotland's chosen passage from Luke 2:10 in a slightly wider context. We now read Luke 2: 8-14.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby Bethlehem, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the

heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.” Amen

Our choice of music this evening is the wonderful Advent hymn – *O come, O come, Emmanuel*. Based on the ancient Advent Antiphons, it was translated by John Mason Neale, an English Anglican priest, scholar and hymn writer, in 1851. Let’s listen to it now.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xtpJ4Q_Q-4

Let us come together in prayer:

Heavenly Father, we come before you now in the quiet of this evening. We know that you are our constant companion along life’s journey and we thank you that you are ever present. Lord be with us now. O come, O come, Emmanuel.

Lord of Hope, we thank you for this time of Advent. A time for us to be still and know that you are God. A time to prepare our hearts and minds and to think about what happened all those centuries ago. We take time to reflect upon the star, the star that shone as a beacon of Hope over the lowly stable. Lord be with us now. O come, O come, Emmanuel.

King of Hope, we give thanks to you for all we have been given. We thank you for our families and friends and for the time we may be able to spend together during this

Advent season and especially at Christmas time. Lord be with us now. O come, O come, Emmanuel.

Lord of Hope, we live in such turbulent and violent times. We pray for your world and for those people whose lives have been so damaged by war. We remember in particular all those whose peaceful existence has been shattered by the violent conflict in Israel and Gaza. We bring before you all those who have been killed, injured or displaced, for the many families grieving the loss of someone dear. We pray, too, for all those around the world whose lives are shattered by war, famine, or natural disasters. Lord be with them now. O come, O come, Emmanuel.

Loving God, we pray for communities closer to home. For families struggling with rising living costs. May the many foodbanks set up in our communities provide regular support for them through such difficult times. We pray, too, for your protection and healing and we remember those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit and who feel a lack of Hope at this time. For families and individuals who have lost a loved one or a close friend or neighbour. Wrap them in your loving embrace, we pray. And in a moment of silence now, we bring before you those known to us who need your loving support. We hold them up to you now, Lord:

[moment of silence]

And finally, Lord of Hope, we thank you for our own church, our minister Gillian and her family, all of the church staff and those who help behind the scenes to allow us to worship together. May we seek always to do your will and to help others who need our support and comfort through difficult times. Watch over all of us, we pray, and keep us safe. Lord of Hope, be with us all now as the time of Advent approaches. O come, O come, Emmanuel. Amen.

Our final reading is Hymn 284, *Hope is a candle*, written by Richard Leach.

Hope is a candle, once lit by the prophets,
Never consumed though it burns through the years;
Dim in the daylight of power and privilege –
When they are gone, hope will shine on.

Peace is a candle to show us a pathway,
Threatened by gusts from our rage and our greed.
Friend, feel no envy for those in the shadows –
Violence and force, their dead-end course.

Love is a candle whose light makes a circle,
Where every face is the face of a friend.
Widen the circle by sharing and giving –
God's holy dare: love everywhere.

Joy is a candle of mystery and laughter,

Mystery of light that is born in the dark;
Laughter at hearing the voice of an angel,
Ever so near, casting out fear.

Christ is the light that the prophets awaited,
Christ is the lion, the lamb and the child.
Christ is the love, and the mystery and laughter –
Candles make way! Christ is the day.

Let us come together now to say the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name;
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in
heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our
sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from
the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the
kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and
for ever. Amen

Blessing May the Hope of Advent fill our lives with joy,
the Peace of God be in our hearts,
The Grace of God be in our words,
The Love of God be in our hands,
and the joy of God be in our souls, now and forever
more. AMEN.