

Worship at Home—13 December 2020

Third Sunday in Advent

Worship Leader Rev Easter Smart

CALL TO WORSHIP

Even if we cannot gather in person
Emmanuel, God with us
Even if some Christmas traditions have had to go
Emmanuel, God with us
Even if we might not get to hug
Emmanuel, God with us
Even if we cannot sing carols
Emmanuel, God with us
Even if Christmas cheer is harder this year
Emmanuel, God with us

Let us Pray

Lord Jesus, You came, and You come to all
You came, and You come to the poorest
And the most vulnerable
Come to us here, Lord Jesus
help and to heal the poverty of our souls
Come to refresh and inspire us
Even through the weakness of our faith...
Come—to love us and hold us—
Give us the courage always to point to You
For Your names' sake. Amen



It is with great sadness that
we have to intimate the death
of

Dorothy Weatherston
11 Nether Currie Road

Please pray for the family

Lighting of the Advent Candles

On the first Sunday of Advent, we lit the candle of hope, reminding us that through our faith in God, no situation in life is ever hopeless.

On the second Sunday we lit a candle for peace as a reminder, that in spite of the world's turmoil, peace is always God's will.

This third Sunday our light symbolises God's special gift of joy—a gift from God who came and comes to us in the depths of our souls.

The angel said to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid, for see—I bring you good news of great Joy."



Advent Candle Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for all those who prepared the way of your coming, whether long ago in Bethlehem, or in countless hearts since that day. Help us, to prepare the way. Open our eyes to your presence and your purpose for our lives and our community. Show us how to make you Happy that we may share your Joy. We pray that true joy would come into the world, and that there will be peace for all.

Amen

The Birth of Jesus Foretold: Luke 1 verses 26-42

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.

And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.

He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped for joy in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child in your womb."

Meditation Part 1

Today we revisit Mary's importance in bringing Jesus into the world. Without Mary, God's plan to come into the world to save humanity from sin and despair would not have been fulfilled as it was. We are so aware in these dark days of winter and of Covid, that our world is in as much need of God's saving love now as it was then.

When we hear the familiar story in Luke, a story we have heard so many times that its familiarity might mean that we miss the depth of its power and meaning. I was reading Adam Hamilton's book, *the Journey* in which he describes travelling to Nazareth (and to Bethlehem) to retrace the steps of Mary's life. Nazareth was a tiny town in Mary's day. In fact it is not mentioned once in the Hebrew bible. The nearby town of

Sepphora was a wealthy city full of luxury villas and affluence. However Nazareth was tiny, with a handful of shepherds and labourers, many of whom worked for the rich people in Sepphora and some actually lived in homes carved out in the Caves. What Nazareth did have, however was a natural spring which still exists today. That spring was known as living water. Adam Hamilton explains that for God to choose someone from such a humble lowly out-of-the-way town, shows that God looks for the meek and the humble to serve his great purposes. This is true time and time again if we look at scripture.

Mary was young and likely in her late teens because women were betrothed to be married at that age back then. According to custom, she would have had a year-long engagement (a bit like the old Scottish hand-fasting) followed by a more formal ceremony. Mary was young but she obviously had a strong faith in God—a trusting faith. But nothing could have prepared her for a visit from an angel. The messenger appears and proclaims to Mary, *“Blessed are you among women”* and he tells her that she is *“full of grace!”*

This literally means, *“one who has been filled with God’s Grace”*—in other words, Mary is already full of God’s kindness, his love, his care, God’s blessing and work in her. Grace itself is not passive—it has a kind of power. Grace can heal, it can change hearts and bring peace. And so Mary is full of grace and she has pleased God, and she is to bear the Incarnate Grace of God in a Son. The angel Gabriel also tells her that her child would be great.

Mary, perplexed and understandably startled, asks this angel, *“how can this be?”*

For anyone to be told they are to have a child, is enormous news . . . but, in those days, being pregnant before one was married, would be a source of scandal and shame for Mary, for her family and for Joseph and his family too. According to the Jewish law, young women who were legally engaged but found to be pregnant could be stoned to death. She knew at the very least, Joseph would likely call the wedding off to save face and this would shame her more.

And yet, despite all these concerns, Mary responded to the Angel, *“here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”*

We may wonder how on earth Mary was able to accept the angel’s announcement. Somewhere, deep down, Mary believed in the promises of God. She understood that God was at work in the world and in her life. She trusted the angel that God was doing something wonderful and she responded, *“Let it be according to your word.”*

Presbyterians often down play the role of Mary at Christmas. Roman Catholics refer to Mary as the ‘Queen of Heaven’, but after the Reformation, Protestant traditions tend to minimise Mary’s role. But we have to remember that God’s plans for the salvation of the world hinged around Mary and her willingness to carry God’s child—to give birth to God. To trust that God’s plans were greater than she could understand.

A minister named Christian Coon described a Children’s Christmas play at his church when dozens of children had come to sing and dress up as wise men, sheep, shepherds, sheep and camels. None of the boys were fighting to be Joseph because he didn’t have any lines. Yet, when the teacher asked, *“Who wants to be Mary?”* lots of hands shot up—all the girls wanted the starring role.

Christian Coon asks the question, *“Do you think Mary wanted to be Mary? . . . knowing the scandal and potential punishment for pregnancy out of wedlock, knowing her hopes for a traditional wedding with Joseph might come to an end . . . knowing that in those days many young women died in childbirth . . . and not understanding exactly what the future might hold for her . . . yet with her heart pounding, and with all that uncertainty, fear and confusion, Mary answered, “Here I am, the Servant of the Lord.”*

We now have the treat of listening to Heather sing, "Mary did you know?" The words are in also printed in the PDF.

SONG MARY DID YOU KNOW *sung by Heather Merriman*

Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy
Has come to make you new?
This child that you delivered, will soon deliver you.
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would calm the storm with his hand?
Did you know that your baby boy
Has walked where angels trod?
When you kiss your little baby
You kiss the face of God
Mary, did you know?
The blind will see, the deaf will hear
The dead will live again
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak
The praises of the Lamb
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy
Is heaven's perfect Lamb? That sleeping child you're
Holding is the great, I Am?

Mary, did you know?

We will now hear those words shared by Christian Aid volunteers.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/churches/meditation-advent>

Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat—Luke 1: 46-55

And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

Meditation Part 2

When we look further into Mary’s story, we find that Joseph also had a visitation from an angel—and because of the angel, Joseph decided not to divorce Mary quietly. Mary herself was sent to stay with her cousin Elizabeth for the first months of her pregnancy. Elizabeth was in the sixth month of her own pregnancy and when Elizabeth greeted Mary, she proclaimed, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child of your womb . . . for as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb jumped for joy.”

Mary responded to Elizabeth’s joy with a hymn—a hymn we know as the Magnificat. The Latin term Magnificat means, “My Soul magnifies the Lord” which leads to one of our favourite hymns *Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord, unnumbered blessings bring my spirit joy.*

Joy is our theme for our third candle, this Sunday in Advent. Joy is not simply happiness, or frivolity. These are things we experience at Christmas with school concerts, Christmas do’s and work nights out . . . when we had normal celebrations.

Christmas, like everything else in 2020 will be less busy, with fewer friends, fewer family get-togethers and fewer festive celebrations. But that does not mean that we need miss out on the deep joy of God’s gift to our lives. In fact, perhaps this year, more than busier ones, we might seek to deepen our awareness of God’s blessing—an awareness which brings joy.

There are so many parts of the Christian life that are hard to explain—the power of music or prayer, the invisible yet penetrating power of love that permeates all of our living. Joy, like love or hope, is one of those invisible dimensions of human life that we cannot explain but we know it is there when we feel it within. That is certainly what happened to Elizabeth and of course to Mary when they were together. They felt joy because they were felt the presence of God.

Sometimes when we feel joy, when we feel a giddiness within, or when we behold something beautiful, we might feel moved to burst into song. That is certainly true of Mary.

Mary responded to Elizabeth’s greeting with a hymn—a hymn we know as the Magnificat. The key is in the Latin translation of the word, “My soul magnifies the Lord.” There was a high school student who mixed up his history and his RME lessons. He wrote in an essay, “When Mary learned that she was to be a mother, she wrote the Magna Carta.”

Mary’s famous Magnificat is remembered in the hymn, Tell Out My Soul the greatness of the Lord. However, some believe that we should not celebrate Mary’s words because her song is a song of revolution. She sang that through the Messiah, the mighty will be brought low; the humble, the lowly will be exalted. William Temple, formerly the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested to the missionaries in India that they should not share the Magnificat in public. The verses were too inflammatory . . . too terrifying to the establishment.

But the coming of the Christ-child was and is revolutionary. It is not meant to leave us comfortable—it is meant to shake us up and to remind ourselves the kind of King God sent. Jesus was not born in a place like Herod, but among the homeless in a stable behind an inn. Christ came to lift up the lowly, to bless the poor. When Mary sang her song, she was confident that the child she was carrying was the answer to humanity's need. He would be a Saviour who could bridge all humanity to God, a God whose name is love. Here is a time not to look back at a birth all those years ago . . . but rather an opportunity for us all to be reborn in our need to love one another and God. Mary felt joy because she was bearing God's love to the world and we too are called to share in that joy and to join with Mary in her song, *"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."*

Pastoral Prayer—Louise Lamont

Heavenly Father, as we draw closer to the miracle that is Christmas and the celebrations surrounding the birth of our saviour, we remember those for whom this has been a year like no other.

We are all thankful for the tireless work of the virologists who have managed to develop a vaccine against this dreadful pandemic sweeping the globe. But let us not forget the volunteers who have been injected and allowed themselves to be used as guinea pigs. Without them we would not be in the position we are at present. Nurture them and let them know that you have been with them every step of the way and will continue to support them in their endeavours.

For many it will be a lonely Christmas. So many people have lost loved ones this year that, for them, celebrations will not be top of the list. Comfort them with your loving embrace and the knowledge that their loved ones are with you in Heaven. Others have lost jobs and are struggling to put a basic meal on the table let alone a Christmas dinner. Assure them that there are many people who are there to assist them and that Christmas is not about wild extravagances but rather a symbol of hope and rebirth. With your help we can reach the end of the tunnel.

We who are fortunate to have heat, food, shelter and close friends and family thank you for all the blessings that you bestow on us. Guide us to those who are in need of our help that we may make them aware of your ever-loving presence.

Sadly there are still places in the world suffering natural disasters or wars or oppression. At this time it can be difficult for aid to reach them. Whisper in the ears of the warlords and oppressors to step back and realise the harm they are doing. Let 2021 be the year that they listen to you and work to help their people.

Help us to follow your teachings and to be the loving disciples that you know we can be.

We pray this in the name of your son and our saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen

The Blessing

Blessing Comfort,
joy and peace be Yours.
Know how blessed You are
and go to be that blessing to all around You.
May God Almighty hold you
and all whom you love
in the palm of His hand
this day and always. Amen

A Message from Peter

I would like to thank the whole Currie Kirk church family for their support, good wishes, messages, cards, texts and emails throughout this year's Great British Bake Off. It means a great deal to know that everyone was cheering on, and I hope the Tuesday night programmes were an enjoyable break in the week (and not too nerve-wracking!).

Peter



Currie Kirk Guild

Our pre Christmas meetings come to an end next Tuesday 15 December with our virtual Christmas party at 1pm. Be ready with pen and pencil as well as drinks and nibbles for the quiz. Currie Kirk Guild has kept going throughout this dreadful year and we will not let a minor hiccup like a global pandemic stand in the way of some much needed fun even if it is via zoom.

Don't forget donations of cartons of custard, canned vegetables, toiletries for the foodbank if you can manage them.

Congratulations to our Guild Member Norma Peacock whose first great grandchild was born at the beginning of December.

Hope to see as many of you as possible on Tuesday—dress Christmassy!

Louise Lamont Guild President



Michael's Christmas Carols

It's a long time since we were in the Church enjoying the music played by Michael. The MOF Committee has asked him to compile a CD of Christmas Carols playing in the Church. The CD will cost £5 with all profits going to Currie Kirk. Order yours today from Nina at the Kirk Office.

Nativity Drawings

To help decorate the Church Doors we are looking for your children's drawings. Let's brighten up Currie with a sparkle!! Please contact Heather familyworker_jvp@outlook.com or post through the letter box at the Gibson Craig Hall.

Fiona Pigott

Don't Forget ...



Easter would like you to send in photos with your Christmas Jumpers, or lighting your Christmas Tree. In fact, anything festive—for publication in our Christmas Sermon sheet.

Please send to Nina by **17 December**.

Balerno Parish Church has a series of carols and readings for Advent. These can be found at www.balernochurch.org.uk

Mary's story

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Today is the third Sunday of Advent. The third candle represents joy. You may want to light a candle in your home as you say this prayer together, then leave it lit as you do the rest of the activities together. (Remember to blow it out at the end!)

Jesus, you are joy even in the saddest times.
Help us to praise you when we are upset or
grieving. Shine joy into our hearts we pray.
Amen.



Play together...

Who am I?

Write different characters/famous people's names onto sticky notes. Stick a note onto each person's forehead or back without letting them see. Their task is to work out who they are by asking yes or no questions.

Question...

How would you define joy?
What brings you joy?
What's the most joyful message you've ever received?



Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 and Luke 1:26-38. You can read them in a Bible or find them here: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=isaiah+61%3A1-4%2C+8-11%3B+Luke+1%3A26-38&version=GNT>

You could try reading the verses in different versions to see if it adds to your understanding of the passage.



Talk together...

How do you think Mary felt when the angel told her she was going to have such a special baby? Do you think Mary was a good choice?

What do you think the best thing about being a parent is?

Was the message from the angel a joyful one? What do you think is the best bit of the angel's message?

The Bible says that Mary was obedient to God. What does it mean to be obedient?

The words in Isaiah 61:1-2, are ones that Jesus repeated and said he came to fulfil. Can you think of any examples of Jesus bringing good news, healing, freeing or rescuing people?

Do you think Mary knew before Jesus was born that would do all these incredible things?

What do you think it would be like to see an angel?

Make together...

Angel food craft: You'll need marshmallows, Maltesers, white chocolate buttons and white chocolate.

Melt the white chocolate and use it to stick a Malteser onto the top of a marshmallow.

Then use another small blob to stick a button on top of the Malteser.

Cut a button in half and using the melted chocolate as glue, stick each half onto the back of the marshmallow to look like the angels wings.

Leave it to set then enjoy!

If you like, you could experiment and make a marshmallow Mary too then use them to retell today's story.



Praise together...

God is with us, Casting Crowns:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhzWypOp-E4&feature=youtu.be>



Pray together...

Dear God, Thank you for the story of Mary. Help us to be obedient and servant hearted like she was as we live for you.

Help us to be brave when we face scary or uncertain times, trusting in you to protect and guide us.

Help us to praise you throughout the challenges. Amen.

Play together...

Play a game of Simon says. Take it in turns to be the leader. This game is about listening and being obedient to what you're told to do (or not do!). How could we show we are listening to God and being obedient to him just like Mary and Jesus were?

Nina is working from home but can be contacted:
Telephone 451 5141; email: currie_kirk@btconnect.com
And the link to the website: [//www.curriekirk.org](http://www.curriekirk.org)
You Tube: search Currie Kirk for all the Sunday Services